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**HANDBOOK TO SHAKESPEARE'S  
WORKS**

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A HANDBOOK  
TO THE WORKS OF  
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

BY  
MORTON LUCE

AUTHOR OF "A HANDBOOK TO THE WORKS OF ALFRED LORD  
TENNYSON," ETC., ETC.



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**TO MY FRIEND  
EDWARD DOWDEN**



## PREFACE

THIS "Handbook to Shakespeare" offers in one volume the critical and explanatory helps that must otherwise be sought from many books.

As far as possible, it embodies all recent research; and, like the author's "Handbook to Tennyson," aims at illustrating principles while it supplies information.

References are made to the Globe Edition of Shakespeare's works; and for the duration of dramatic action I am indebted to Mr. Daniel's time analysis of the plays.

As on former occasions, my best thanks are due to Mr. W. J. Lias, late Scholar of Jesus College, Cambridge, for his kindness in revising the proofs; I have also to thank the Rev. Tabor Davies, M.A., for similar help, and for compiling the Index.

UPPER BELGRAVE ROAD,  
CLIFTON.

\* \* \* \* \*

Since the foregoing went to press, I have read Dr. A. C. Bradley's "Shakespearean Tragedy," and I should be unjust to Shakespeare and to Art if I omitted to call attention to pages 407-429 of this Handbook, where I have ventured to point out the fallacy which underlies Dr. Bradley's otherwise thoughtful and useful volume. I must mention, however, that in spite of our differences of opinion, Dr. Bradley is at one with me where he asserts that (p. 285), "all things in the world are vanity except love"; indeed, he strikingly reproduces a line which is



printed (sometimes more than once) in all my books—  
“There’s nothing we can call our own but love.”

\* \* \* \* \*

At request I add a few words on the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy. My own views are fully expressed in the following pages. Here I may briefly remark that in our Elizabethan literature Spenser comes first, and stands alone; after him, two authors may be separated from all the rest; and they are Shakespeare and Bacon. Of these two it may fairly be said that the former was supreme in emotion, imagination, poetry, art; while the latter represented thought, intellect, prose, science. But no such distinctions between man and man are absolute; Shakespeare descended at his will to the most rigid intellectual analysis, and Bacon rose habitually to a heaven of imagination, cold, however, and emotionless. Ethically, moreover, as we shall see in Chapter VII, the two men drifted apart.

Further, in days such as those, when the world was narrow, and London a mere cluster of houses, and society young enough and small enough to gossip like a modern village, it was natural that men and women of distinction should know each other intimately by hearsay, if not personally. It would also be natural that two great authors, who were the main product of a mighty age, should produce work having much in common, both in regard to thought and expression. This is the case with Bacon and Shakespeare; and it may be assumed that a complete knowledge of one of these writers is impossible without reference to the other. ●

I may add that Bacon, like most of his compeers, wrote verse; but whatever poetic imagination he may have possessed does not appear to any appreciable extent in the few stanzas he has left behind him.

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# HANDBOOK TO SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS

## CHAPTER I

### PRELIMINARY

#### *(a) Plan of the Work*

I N my former critical and explanatory publications I have striven to obey certain laws of literary comment that are not, as I think, generally recognized; and I take this opportunity of making a few preliminary remarks which may serve to indicate more clearly the scope and purpose of a work like the present.

The principles that guide us in the exposition of a science should apply equally to such a literary undertaking as this "Handbook to Shakespeare"; the information must be of the right kind, of the right amount, and given in the right order.

But the commentary on a writer of imaginative literature, although scientific throughout in its method, will be partly scientific in its intention, and partly artistic; it will aim at supplying those matters of information that are necessary to an acquaintance with the author and a right understanding of his productions, and it will add the yet more important æsthetic considerations that lead to his appreciation as a literary artist.

But I may point out that these two departments of literary comment, the scientific and the artistic, are separ-

ated by no definite border-line; the higher, or artistic criticism, will constantly appeal to the lower, which alone made it possible; knowledge must come before appreciation. For example, if I am told that Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" was written in 1600, and his "Tempest" in 1611, I shall expect to find that the poet's views of love in the earlier play will contrast most strikingly with his treatment of the same subject in the later play; in other words, the scientific fact of chronology throws light on the aesthetic consideration of motive.

I have here to consider an objection that is urged almost periodically, especially against the second division of my subject, that is to say, against the artistic or aesthetic criticism—"Why comment at all? we do not want help; let us enjoy the poet in our own way." But the answer is a brief one in this or any other age. It is really a matter of arithmetic; the pleasure we find in a work of art will be in proportion to our knowledge. If "to appreciate Milton is the reward of consummate scholarship," to appreciate Shakespeare is no less; for example, we may not all recognize how much he was indebted to classical authors (see p. 39); and it is the business of the commentator to call our attention to this and similar facts, and thus to afford us yet another opportunity of listening to the lordly music flowing from the illimitable years.

Let us agree, therefore, that every added item of knowledge makes possible another item of enjoyment; that as far as in him lies, the commentator places the required information, practical or aesthetic, before the reader; and that without such aid the reader must spend years in the attainment of this knowledge, or that, as frequently happens, he may never attain it.

(b) *The Scientific Element*.—Under the head of scientific information come those portions of my book that are more or less historical, biographical, or bibliographical. In order

to study an eminent writer to the best advantage, we begin by taking a glance at the epoch that gave him not only his birth, but also a measure of his genius; it is the great historic age that makes the great artist, especially the poet. The "spacious times of great Elizabeth" begot and half made Shakespeare. This also is a truth, that biography should support criticism; though the degree in which the life of the writer illustrates or is bound up with his writings will vary to a very great extent, as may be well seen by comparing Shakespeare with Milton. As to bibliographical details, these supplement our general study at many points too numerous to specify. Finally, there are items of interpretation, technical explanation, and the like; these I give as far as possible in their due proportion and in their appropriate place.

(c) *Literary Criticism and the Drama*.—In regard to the critical portions of this book, I should first remark that Shakespeare's writings are mostly dramatic; and we must briefly examine the question as to how far dramatic criticism may avail itself of the literary methods, and whether its intention is theatrical as well as dramatic; or to put the case more plainly, does it deal with a play of Shakespeare's, for example, as something to be acted or as something to be read?

On the importance—the predominance—of the literary element in a dramatic commentary I need hardly insist; dramatic criticism is but a department of the literary criticism, and is only so far independent as metre is of rhythm, or the structure of a sentence of its rhetorical expressiveness; even a dramatic character, situation or incident is evolved through the medium of language, and must be finally tested by the canons of style. But these remarks, as we shall see later, apply chiefly to verse; what we have here to consider is the relation of drama to stage representation, and of commentator to theatre.

I admit that the dramatist does well to keep his eye on the stage when he writes; also that drama is a fairly differentiated form of literature or even an independent growth trained mostly in the theatre; yet I am inclined to think that we attach too much importance to actors and acting and the *mise en scène*; I may be in error, and, according to some critics, the relation of drama to its acting is similar to that of music to its performance.

At the first glance this comparison seems apt and convincing, but when closely examined it proves to be both insufficient and misleading. To discover the fallacy that underlies it, we have but to compare mentally the reading of a play with the reading of a piece of music; for the former we need no extraneous aid, but for the latter we require most of us an instrumental interpretation.

For the symbols employed in printed music are very different from those of printed speech; the symbols of music are almost inarticulate;<sup>1</sup> even to a Liszt or a Wagner they are made articulate chiefly by the unconscious agency of words. Words, on the other hand, have a history, and a vitality derived in part from that history. Our mental lives are mostly built up of words; whether they are spoken or written, their potency, their power of suggestion, is marvellous.

Although my remarks may be applied also to prose, they refer especially to dramas like Shakespeare's, which are cast mostly in a finer mould; there is a form of literature in which the potency and power of suggestion that lives in words is still more marvellous; a form that raises literature to a higher level than even the form of drama<sup>2</sup>; through the magic of printed *verse*, shapes, sound, action,

<sup>1</sup> At present we do not live on sounds; what we may do some day—what musical symbols may become—articulate, perhaps, and, like music itself, a language after long use—all this is quite another matter.

<sup>2</sup> Thus the canons of verse dominate and determine the whole work, including all the dramatic elements. See also "ultimately style is a revelation of soul," ch. iv., p. 27.

colour, each in its perfection, reach the mental eye and the spiritual ear. Thus poetry is the most spiritual of the arts, and when it calls in the aid of coarser senses it may become deadened or degraded. "Heard melodies," says Keats, "are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter." And this is equally true of the poetic drama; on the stage its ineffable idealism may become vulgar realism.

At first the danger may not appear imminent, and much, of course, depends on the actor; but at his best he will seldom, if ever, reach the ideal that every intelligent reader will have created for himself, and this more especially if the actor's utterance is verse—verse like the famous soliloquy in "Hamlet." And apart from the actor, a dramatic poem such as Shakespeare's must often lose by the very elaborateness of modern staging, which leaves too little to the imagination,<sup>1</sup> till, as I hinted above, our taste for the ideal is destroyed; and there follows a reversion to the concrete, to "those gilt gauds men-children" flock to see";<sup>2</sup> and finally, I repeat, the drama is lost in the show.

As a fact, the relation between drama and the theatre

<sup>1</sup> "The very nakedness of the stage, too, was an advantage, for the drama thus became something between recitation and re-presentation."—COLERIDGE.

<sup>2</sup> "*Flicker down* (to brainless pantomime)") says the same poet in the context, by which he implies "reversion ever dragging evolution in the mud"; and note the expression *men-children*. To an Indian, gesture and dance are more than literary language; they are to a child. In art as in language we begin with pantomime; even when learning a language we eke out our meaning with gesture. So the dancing of the Greeks may be a lost art; so perhaps is their oratory, with its *sermo corporis*; and a modern Demosthenes would scarcely give to his questioner the thrice-repeated answer, "Action." Gesture, pantomime, dance, acting—with these humanity begins rather than ends; as it grows older, it abandons the coarser, the obtrusive aids to expression; it ceases to caper, to gesticulate, to act; ceases even to label its words with flexion; it avoids excessive punctuation; it will imagine that an opera singer must desecrate the silent music of "Come into the garden, Maud," and in some moods it will go to a bookstall instead of a theatre.

<sup>3</sup> Few people, I imagine, would care to hear Shakespeare if they had to sit or stand in an Elizabethan theatre.



is reflex and retrospective quite as much as active and prospective; the exigencies of stage-representation (and herein, I admit, lies the weakness of the novel<sup>1</sup>) imposed on dramatic literature its finest elements of art-form<sup>2</sup>; but, these gained, drama can be enjoyed independently of the theatre; and, as we have seen, it may even lose in the acting. Indeed, an "acting-version" is not seldom a mutilated version.<sup>3</sup>

The truth appears to be this; all literature is a development; language itself was meant to be spoken, the story was meant to be told with appropriate gesture, the song to be sung, the speech to be delivered, the epic to be recited, the play to be acted; but by degrees all these forms became more and more literary (and, with the aid of print) a matter of the library and the reader. In drama the differentiation is most marked (but this is variable), where verse takes the place of prose; a prose play, in our time at any rate, is nearer to the theatre.

And now, by way of concluding, but not exhausting this important subject, I think we shall admit that certain dramas, or portions of a drama, especially the poetic, may possibly transcend acting, and then acting should keep away from them;<sup>4</sup> at least we learn that drama of the

<sup>1</sup> This chiefly as regards prose; and we make no comparison between the novel and the poetic drama; for *the form of verse* (see above) *raises literature to a higher level than even the form of drama*.

<sup>2</sup> Again assuming the two forms of drama, prose and verse.

<sup>3</sup> For example, in "Twelfth Night" as usually acted, the second scene of the first act begins the play, and thus the magnificent overture, which is Shakespeare's purpose in the first scene, is robbed of fully one half of its effect.

<sup>4</sup> We are told, for example, that the romantic element in "Twelfth Night" makes it less suitable for acting than most of the other comedies. In this we have at least a germ of truth; yet the larger truth lies in the fact that whether a poetic drama is read or acted, certain ideal conditions—blank verse, for instance—are assumed by the poet: and to my thinking, although the actor may sometimes aid the poet, it often happens that the ideal conditions imposed on the audience at a theatre are much more exacting than those which are required of the reader. (Cf. the witch scenes in "Macbeth.")

highest type has a literary as well as a spectacular aspect ; that Shakespeare lives in literature, and not on the stage ; that for once his plays are acted they are read perhaps a million times ; and that in a commentary like the present the literary aspect is the more important, and should occupy the larger space.

## CHAPTER II

## THE AGE OF SHAKESPEARE

**I**T was mentioned in the preceding chapter that the great historic age makes the great poet; we may now add—and with some emphasis—the great dramatist. He differs from the great epic poet, for his work must be original; his subject, though capable of ideal treatment, and true for all the centuries, must show the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure.

It follows, therefore, that a study of Shakespeare should be prefaced by a sketch of the mighty epoch that produced both the man and his work.

It is the period of our literature known popularly as the Elizabethan; if a more descriptive title is desired—or desirable—let us call it the English Renaissance; and if we allow Chaucer a place by himself, it is the second great period of our poetry, and the first of our drama and our prose. Assigning approximate dates, we may say that it covers the decades between 1580 and 1660, or the years that lie between the birth of Shakespeare and the death of Milton.

Nevertheless, for a first picture of this great age, we need open no ponderous annals; we merely glance at just one play of its great poet.

Take "The Tempest," for example. Here we have the new heaven and the new earth of the Renaissance, its ampler moral ether, its strange lands beyond the sea, and salvages and men of Inde; here is retirement, not of the

cloister, but the study; here thought is free, and books are prizable above a dukedom. Here, too, is England, its turfy mountains and flat meadows and nibbling sheep, and furze and broom, and oak and lime; its sun-burned sicklemen; its bogs and fens and fen fires, its spongy April, its flower-trimmed river-banks. Here, too, are England's daring and enterprise, naval, commercial, colonial; her nobler constant power and will to humanize the world, her baser, fitful pilferings and greed of gold.

Here, too, in a single play are all the conditions of Elizabethan or Jacobean society from Queen and King to clown; the royal ruler and the royal rogue; the courtier who only professes to persuade, the faithful counsellor, the smooth-faced, smooth-tongued traitor, the true friend; the high-souled philosopher, the low-souled simpleton or churl, and even the soulless man-beast; here is all that is young and fair and noble in man, and young and pure and beautiful in woman. These live their very life before our eyes; they adorn the virtues of their time, or betray its follies; they discuss for our instruction its graver or its lighter themes and theories, its politics, its chivalrous devotion to a monarch, its love of law and order, of home and fatherland, its pastimes, its beliefs and its imaginings, its philosophies and its foibles; they lay bare to us the nobler and the vainer hours of its inmost life. Could any history do more?

But this is not the whole picture; what charms us most in any such masterpiece of art is the creative presence of the artist; that is *the* picture after all; it is Shakespeare—Shakespeare whose greatness is the measure of his age, Shakespeare, the magnificent impersonation of Elizabethan England; Shakespeare, with his chastened mirth or his mirth uncontrollable; his opulent humour, gay or grave; his practical common sense and tolerance of the inevitable facts of life; his endless delight in beauty, truth, love; his passing mood of heartache, or troubled

brain, or beating mind; his pleasure in song; his ponderings over the insubstantial pageant of drama; and his deeper ponderings over the insubstantial pageant of the drama of life.

But, finally, we have also the abiding elements of the man—the nation—humanity; a reverent faith in “Providence divine”; a fixed belief that all things work together for good; that the rarer action is in virtue; that the readiness is all: “Every third thought shall be my grave”; that the fundamental doctrine of this human existence lies not in formal creeds but in the life of Christ: “Every man shift for all the rest”; that “There’s nothing we can call our own but love” (v. 20-30).

But this living picture of Shakespeare’s England, “The Tempest,” is a drama; and it contains within itself another example of dramatic art—the masque which graced the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda; and thus it brings to our notice two other features of the time—a delight in dramatic representation, and the magnificent drama that partly created and was partly created by that delight.

Indeed, this is for England the epoch of drama; no life was ever so dramatic as that of the Age of Drake and the Armada, and the reflection of that life in art will naturally be found in the play and the theatre. Here at least is a partial explanation of what is usually regarded as phenomenal—the rapid development of the drama in the reign of Elizabeth; and I may add that printed books were beyond the reach of the populace, who were thus happily deprived of the novel and driven to the playhouse. Here they learnt to appreciate the importance of art form, and, as it happened, the very highest form of art—the poetic dramas of Shakespeare.

But the impulse that gave rise to this poetic drama in the reign of Elizabeth, came not only from within; it was due to many causes, some of which we now briefly summarize.

First among these was an external pressure, both political and religious, that made England a strong and united nation, with a new belief in its great destinies. Next, England's sovereign, the "imperial votaress" of "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*," drew the hearts of her people unto herself, as the moon may draw the ocean; the tradition of chivalry had not died away, and only a woman could have blinded and baffled the astute bigot and despot who then disgraced the throne of Spain.

But I must pass lightly over these political influences, however interesting and important; nor may I dwell on the new world of thought and fancy which we know as the Renaissance, nor on that other new world of land and sea and sky, nor on the new spirit of enterprise that was to found our commerce and our colonies, nor on all the other countless and restless activities that followed this great awakening of the mind, the body, and the soul of the English nation; my concluding space must be reserved for a brief notice of the literary sources of this marvellous Elizabethan drama.

First to be mentioned is the Classic Drama, whose influence was partly direct, and partly diverted; of this we name three varieties, the Latin comedy, the plays of Seneca, and the great Greek tragedy, the first two being an earlier, and the third a later determining force. Next, the Romantic Drama of Italy, some of which was classical in origin; and together with this, the Italian romance generally. Third, the Miracle Plays, Moralities, Interludes, and rough Pageants of our English forefathers prepared the soil for alien dramatic growths, while yielding not a little of their own; and lastly, the new life given to England by the New Age awakened an interest in our English annals at the moment when historic personages were being put on the stage in place of the abstract vices and virtues of the Moralities.

We now pass on to dramatic influences that were con-

temporary and personal; and from Elizabethan writers of plays to whom Shakespeare was most indebted we may at once select the three names of Lyly, Greene, and Marlowe. To Lyly Shakespeare owed a good deal of his style—and that often not of the best—whether in verse or prose; from the same writer he often derived imagery, mythology, dialogue and—but less frequently—his lyric charm; some of this also he caught from Greene, together with those elements in his work that may be styled romantic, idyllic, English; but it was the mighty genius of Marlowe that gave shape if not colour to the yet mightier genius of Shakespeare. For Marlowe at least began what Shakespeare so magnificently completed—the creation of a drama absolutely ideal in its comprehensiveness; a drama that combined all the foregoing elements, the classical, the mediæval, the popular; the tragic, the romantic, the farcical; furthermore it was national, and it was inspired; and something of all this was due to Marlowe. Moreover, in his “Edward II.” Marlowe is not only the exemplar, but also the rival of Shakespeare in the same kind; and, most important of all, he created that powerful precedent of blank verse in drama which drew Shakespeare away from the lyric lead of Greene, and consummated for ever the strength and beauty of art. “Hamlet,” “Othello,” “King Lear” and “Macbeth” are the world’s masterpieces; let us shudder as we imagine what they would have been if written in rhyme.

## CHAPTER III

## BIOGRAPHICAL (HISTORY AND TRADITION)

"SHAKESPEARE," says Dryden, "was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul." Is this one reason why we know so little of the body<sup>1</sup>—the mere outward life of the man? So little indeed, that a biography of Shakespeare should always begin with a statement of the half dozen facts that form its meagre foundations.

We may give these meagre facts in the words of Steevens: "All that is known with any degree of certainty concerning Shakespeare is—that he was born at Stratford-upon-Avon—married and had children there—went to London, where he commenced actor, and wrote poems and plays—returned to Stratford, made his will, died and was buried."

But this brief summary of Steevens should be followed by at least one important reflection; the days of Shakespeare were not the days that deal in *ana*; they dismissed Marlowe with still less care or courtesy; they forgot the very birthdays of Peele and Greene, of Chapman, Lodge, Nash, Kyd; and when I pointed to the meagre facts of Shakespeare's life, I meant rather a meagreness in comparison with the magnitude of his work; for his period of

<sup>1</sup> May we conjecture that if Shakespeare had taken a more conscious interest in his art—his creations—himself—we should have heard more about him—and possibly have been none the better for it?



authorship extended over twenty years and produced nearly twice that number of works, nine tenths of which were masterpieces of their kind. This period we will now survey briefly; but first we must take a yet briefer glance at the thirty years preceding.

We are accustomed to regard with a strange reverence the mere scenes among which some great man has lived, the roof that sheltered him, the fields through which he wandered, the stream that he loved; and thus it comes about that the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury was not more famous as a place of pilgrimage in mediæval England than is a certain small town in Warwickshire in our England of to-day. This town, as everyone knows, is Stratford-on-Avon; here Shakespeare was born, grew to manhood, and married; here he spent his latter days, and here he was laid to rest.

He was baptized on the 26th of April, 1564, and was born, it may be, on the 23rd of the same month (May 5th New Style). His grandfather, Richard Shakespeare, who carried on farming near Stratford, had two sons, John, the poet's father, and Henry, who continued at the farm and died poor in 1596.

About 1581 John Shakespeare settled at Stratford, where he sold timber and corn, did business as a glover and fellmonger, and may have engaged in the kindred trades of butcher and wool dealer. He prospered in business, and in 1557 married Mary, youngest daughter of Robert Arden, a wealthy farmer of the neighbouring village of Wilmcote. From her father, lately deceased, Mary inherited a considerable property, but she appears to have had as little education as her husband; indeed, neither John nor Mary Shakespeare—if we may trust existing documents—could write their own names. Of other children who were born to the parents of William Shakespeare, the eldest son, John, died in infancy, but Gilbert lived till 1612, Richard till 1613, Edmund became

an actor in 1607, and a daughter, Joan, long outlived the poet.

Tradition rather than history fills the wide gap of years between the certificate of baptism of William Shakespeare and his burial on almost the same day of April 1616; nevertheless we have some items of documentary evidence to guide us, and a larger amount of personal testimony that bears on the writer and his writings; and from these again we may gather many details, at least of his mental life. Having made this reservation, I may perhaps dispense with some of the phrases of doubt and assumption that must otherwise be scattered over every page of such a biography as the present.

To Rowe we are indebted for the explicit statement that Shakespeare attended the free school at Stratford; here he may have learnt smaller Latin and less Greek than are assigned to him by Ben Jonson, but considering the times and the conditions generally, the school days of such a genius count for little in the matter of education. Somehow he contrived to know a good deal of Latin, some Greek, and probably some French and Italian. The growing poverty of his father makes it likely that the poet left school at an early age.

The career of John Shakespeare is easy to follow; he was appointed alderman in 1565, accorded the prefix *M<sup>r</sup>*. in 1567, and made bailiff in 1568. In this year he entertained two companies of actors, from which we infer he was no puritan, an inference of some importance as bearing on the religious beliefs of his son. In 1571 he was chief alderman, and in 1575 bought two houses in Stratford (one of these may have been that in Henley St., where Shakespeare is said to have been born). But in 1578 we find him borrowing money, and the next year he sold some of his wife's property. All this is on record, but of the boyhood of his son William we have no definite knowledge; most probably, as Aubrey relates, he helped his father in

business, and tradition adds that he was a butcher's apprentice.<sup>1</sup> More definite, however, is the story of his early marriage, for though the Stratford record is silent regarding the wedding ceremony, a bond "against impediments" is still preserved in the registry of Worcester. This document is dated November 27th, 1582, and it bears the seal of Anne's father; the signatories bind themselves to free the bishop of responsibility; all this seems to imply that while the parents of Anne Hathaway wished to effect the marriage, it was looked on with little favour by John and Mary Shakespeare. The bride chosen by the young poet — he was little more than eighteen — was Anne Hathaway, of the Hamlet of Shottery within Stratford parish. She was older than her husband by seven or eight years; their eldest child, Susanna, was baptized at Stratford parish church on May 26th, six months from the signing of the marriage bond; and it is a curious fact that the play of "Twelfth Night," which has love for its theme generally, both warns against a disparity of years in a manner almost undramatic, and insists on the importance of the public betrothal. It is another curious fact that "The Tempest," which again enlarges upon the importance of the betrothal, speaks also of discord which follows on undue impatience of the marriage bond. Anne's father, the farmer Richard Hathaway, who had lately died, left her by will £6 13s. 4d. "to be paid at the day of her

<sup>1</sup> The deer stealing incident is probably true in its main outlines (see p. 17); but with regard to other traditions that add their element of doubtful wildness to the life of Shakespeare, I leave them to be treasured by such as choose "to judge all nature by her feet of clay." To such also I commend the words of Hawthorne "It is for the high interests of the world not to insist upon finding out that its greatest men are, in a certain lower sense, very much the same kind of men as the rest of us, and often a little worse, because a common mind cannot properly digest such a discovery, nor ever know the true proportion of the great man's good and evil, nor how small a part of him it was that touched our muddy or dusty earth. Thence comes moral bewilderment and even intellectual loss in regard to what was best of him." — *Our Old Home*.

marriage." This document, which is dated September 1st, 1581, is still preserved at Somerset House. The wife of the world's greatest genius appears to have had little education, but we are without proof that she failed to be a helpmeet to her husband, whom she survived seven years.

Other children, twins, a boy and a girl, were baptized February 2nd, 1585; their names, Hamnet and Judith, may have been chosen in regard for Hamnet Sadler, a baker of Stratford, and Judith his wife, for "Hamnet" Sadler is remembered in Shakespeare's will. From this year to 1592, when we find him an actor in London, we have no certain knowledge of William Shakespeare beyond a mention of his name in a Stratford document of 1587 relating to the Ashbies estate, once the property of Mary Arden. This long interval, however, is traversed by interesting, if not always reliable, tradition and conjecture. According to Rowe, the enterprising young Shakespeare was prosecuted by Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote on the charge of deer-stealing; he may have retaliated in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," where we have a Justice Shallow whose "white luses" correspond to the arms borne by the Lucys of Charlecote.<sup>1</sup> This may have been in the year 1585. In 1587 two important companies of actors, the Queen's and Lord Leicester's, returned to London from a tour in the provinces, and Stratford was among the towns they visited. Two other companies were performing at Stratford the same year, and it is highly probable that these strolling players turned Shakespeare's attention to the stage, and to London, even if they did

<sup>1</sup> See p. 16. That Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote is referred to in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" (I. 1) there can be no reasonable doubt; and "the dozen white luses" with its corruption by Sir Hugh Evans into "the dozen white louses" would lose their point if the poet had not some special reason for thus dwelling on the Lucy coat of arms; and no other reason is forthcoming but the tradition supplied by Rowe and supported by Archdeacon Davies (vicar of Saperton, Gloucestershire).

not take him with them. If so, he is not more than twenty-three at the outset of his dramatic career, and has ample time before writing plays to master the business of acting and to acquaint himself with the dramatic literature of his day, and with the literary material from which it was mostly derived. Such training and such a life, far more than school or college, would fit him swiftly and surely for his future work.

Our evidence of Shakespeare in 1592 comes from Greene and Chettle. Robert Greene attacked him, as it appears, in his "Groat's worth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance." Greene died on the 3rd of September in this year, and was probably writing in August. From his deathbed he addresses, as we may suppose, three of his fellow-playwrights, Marlowe, Nash or Peele, and "young Juvenal," who may be Lodge. "Base-minded men all three of you, if by my misery ye be not warned; for unto none of you, like me, sought those burs to cleave; those puppets, I mean, that speak from our mouths; those antics garnished in our colours [*i.e.*, the players]. . . . Yes, trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *tygers heart wrapt in a players hide*, supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes factotum is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrie. . . . Let those apes imitate your past excellence, and nevermore acquaint them with your admired inventions; . . . for it is pittie men of such rare wits should be subject to the pleasures of such rude groomes."

The line "O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide" occurs in the "True tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke" (published 1595), and in the play founded on the "True Tragedie" (3 "Henry VI.," I. iv. 137).<sup>1</sup> In the same year Henry Chettle, who had published Greene's pamphlet,

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VI, sect. 9.

brought out his "Kind Hartes Dreame," and in the Preface we have another passage, equally well known, which must find a place in any biography of Shakespeare. Referring to the bitterness of Greene's attack, he says: "I am as sorry as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because myselfe have seene his demeanor no lesse civill than he exelent in the qualitie<sup>1</sup> he professes, besides divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing that aprooves his Art." It is also customary to record a possible, but not probable, reference to Shakespeare in the lines of Spenser ("Colin Clout," 1594):

And there, though last not least, is Action,  
A gentler shepherd may no where be found:  
Whose Muse, full of high thoughts invention,  
Doth like himselfe Heroically sound.<sup>2</sup>

And on the other hand Shakespeare may refer to Spenser's "Teares of the Muses" (and to the death of Greene) when in his "Midsummer Night's Dream" he speaks of

The thrice three Muses, mourning for the death  
Of learning, late deceased in beggary.

From Chettle it is inferred that Shakespeare was a promising actor, though according to Rowe "the top of his performance was the ghost in his own Hamlet." Yet this could hardly be; the character of a ghost is a very slight test of an actor's capacity. He is also said to have played the part of Adam in "As You Like It," and of Old Knowell in Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour"; strange parts these, and if true, pointing, it may be, to some physical peculiarity; but according to John Davies

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, profession; especially of actor; cf. Hamlet's "Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing?" II. ii., 363, 452.

<sup>2</sup> Probably refers to R. Drayton, author of "*Heroical Epistles*," and of "Idea" (ἰδέα = αἰτίον).

("Scourge of Folly," 1607) he "played some kingly parts in sport."

The year 1593 supplies one item of documentary evidence, for the name William Shakespeare is appended in full to the dedication of "Venus and Adonis," published in that year by Richard Field. Field was a Stratford man and son of a friend of Shakespeare's father, and a connection between him and the poet may be fairly established; and Chettle in his "Kind Harte's Dream" had stated that "divers of worship" commended Shakespeare's "facetious grace in writing," where "divers of worship" may include Southampton, to whom the "Venus" was dedicated.

In 1594 "The Rape of Lucrece," also printed by Field and published by Harrison, bears Shakespeare's name, and he appears among the Lord Chamberlain's actors who played before the Queen at Greenwich in December of that year.

As both the "Venus" and the "Lucrece" were addressed to the Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare must seem to have risen high in social rank; at least he had gained a patron to whom, if we may trust Rowe, he was indebted for £1,000; but the sum must surely have been smaller. Moreover, the Sonnets, which though not published till 1609, were written many of them during these early years, give us similar evidence, and make frequent mention of a personage who is partly their inspiration and their object. By this time also some of Shakespeare's plays were written, and some acted; but we follow his life independently of these, and next note that in 1596 his company was at the Curtain Theatre in Shoreditch. At this period he is said to have lodged near the Bear Garden in Southwark.

On August 11th, 1596, his son Hamnet was buried at Stratford, and in the spring of the next year, 1597, he purchased New Place in his native town; this was a con-

siderable property, for the house stood on nearly an acre of ground. In 1598 he is mentioned in the Stratford rolls as the holder, during a famine, of ten quarters of corn; only two others of the Stratford townsmen had a larger holding; and in the same year we have other curious testimony that must detain us, namely, the only existing letter written to Shakespeare; it dates from London, October, 1598, and asks for a loan of £30. The writer is Richard Quiney, father of Thomas Quiney, afterwards one of Shakespeare's two sons-in-law. Quiney was in London on Stratford business. Two other letters of the same year that contain Shakespeare's name are extant in the Stratford Archives; one is from Abraham Sturley, once bailiff of Stratford, to Richard Quiney in London (January 24th); it mentions that "Mr. Shakespeare is willing to disburse some money upon some odd yardland or other at Shottery, or near about us"; and "he thinketh it a very fit pattern to move him to deal in the matter of our tithes. By the instructions you can give him thereof, and by the friends he can make therefor, we think it a fair mark for him to shoot at, and would do us much good." Later (November 4th) Sturley writes to Quiney hoping "that our countryman Mr. William Shakspeare would procure us money which I will like of, as I shall hear when, and where, and how." And in another letter of 1598 or early in 1599, Richard Quiney's father writes: "If you bargain with William Shakespeare or receive money therefor, bring your money home that you may."

These letters point to Shakespeare's growing prosperity, and apart from the possible help of Southampton, his business as actor and playwright would insure him a considerable return. It is estimated that his plays at this time brought him in about £15 to £20 a year (derived from the theatre, not the publisher); and as an actor he might be earning some £75; in round numbers an income of £100 a year or more (about £1,000 of our money). After



1599 another source of income considerably increased his yearly returns, for in that year Richard and Cuthbert Burbage built the Globe Theatre, and leased out for twenty-one years shares in the receipts of the theatre to "those deserving men Shakespeare, Hemings, Condell, Philips and others." The shareholders were also players. Further, Shakespeare may have had a share in the Blackfriars Theatre, which was also the property of the Burbages.

Other important testimony of the year 1598 is found in "A Comparative Discourse of our English Poets with Greek, Latin, and Italian Poets." This is a chapter in the "Palladis Tamia," or "Wit's Treasury" of Francis Meres, 1598. The following passages are essential to our purpose :

"As the Greeke tongue is made famous and eloquent by *Homer, Hesiod, Euripides, Aeschilus, Sophocles, Pindarus, Phocylides* and *Aristophanes*; and the Latine tongue by *Virgill, Ovid, Horace, Silius Italicus, Lucan, Lucretius, Ausonius* and *Claudianus*: so the English tongue is mightily enriched and gorgeouslylie inuested in rare ornaments and resplendent abilitments by *Sir Philip Sidney, Spencer, Daniel Drayton, Warner, Shakespeare, Marlowe* and *Chapman*. . . . As the Soule of *Euphorbus* was thought to liue in *Pythagoras*: so the sweete wittie Soule of *Ouid* liues in mellifluous and hony-tongued *Shakespeare*, witnes his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, his sugred Sonnets among his priuate friends, etc.

"As *Plautus* and *Seneca* are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines: so *Shakespeare* among y<sup>e</sup> English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for Comedy, witnes his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love labors lost*, his *Love labours wonne*, his *Midsummers night dreame*, and his *Merchant of Venice*: for Tragedy his *Richard the 2. Richard the 3,*

*Henry the 4. King John, Titus Andronicus, and his Romeo and Juliet.*

"As *Epius Stolo* said, that the Muses would speake with *Plautus* tongue, if they would speak Latin; so I say that the Muses would speak with *Shakespeares* fine filed phrase, if they would speake English."

In the same year Richard Barnfield paid his striking tribute to Shakespeare's genius and growing fame:

And Shakespeare, thou whose honey-flowing vein  
Pleasing the world thy praises doth obtain,  
Whose *Venus* and whose *Lucrece* (sweet and chaste),  
Thy name in Fame's immortal book have placed, etc.

Indeed, nearly all of the contemporary reference to Shakespeare that falls within the decade 1590-1600 is kindly and enthusiastic, even when we have taken into account the prevailing fashion of somewhat indiscriminate laudation.

From 1600 to the year of his death our documentary evidence of Shakespeare is mostly legal or financial, and trifling in import; in 1600 he recovered a debt of £7, and in 1604 was again suing a debtor, and yet again in 1609. During these years his prosperity increased; in 1597 he had purchased New Place at Stratford for £60, but in 1602 he paid the large sum of £320 for 107 acres of arable land near Stratford, and later in the same year acquired a cottage garden opposite New Place. Again, in 1605, he purchased for £440 a moiety of the tithes of Stratford, Old Stratford, Bishopton, and Welcombe, and in 1610 he added 20 acres of pasture to his former purchase of arable land. If we seek a purpose in these transactions, may we not find it in the lines of Goldsmith:

I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,  
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down.

However, we must add that in 1613 he purchased a house near the Blackfriars Theatre.

But besides this evidence from his worldly affairs that bears witness to the life of Shakespeare during this later period, we have again to make mention of important and interesting fragments of personal testimony to his popularity and literary fame; from these I select the following by John Davies, 1607 (from "The Scourge of Folly"):

TO OUR ENGLISH TERENCE, MR. WILL SHAKESPEARE.

Some say, good Will, which I in sport do sing,  
Hast thou not played some kingly parts in sport,  
Thou hadst been companion for a king,  
And been a king among the meaner sort  
Some others rail; but rail as they think fit,  
Thou hast no railing but a reigning wit;  
And honesty thou sow'st which they do reap,  
To increase their stock which they do keep.

Shakespeare's father had died in 1601, and his mother in 1608; he lost his brother Edmund in 1607. In the same year his eldest daughter, Susanna, was married at Stratford to Mr. John Hall, a Master of Arts, and a successful physician; their daughter, Elizabeth, was twice married, but died without issue in 1679.

Shakespeare is supposed to have sold his shares in the Globe and Blackfriars theatres about the year 1611, when he retired to New Place. There, except for an occasional visit to London, he resided till his death. The records of his life are now connected with Stratford affairs, and there is little of interest that claims a place in this brief summary; nor of his death need anything further be recorded or conjectured here than that he died at the age of fifty-two, on the 23rd of April, 1616, that on the 25th of the same month his mortal remains were buried seventeen feet beneath the chancel of Stratford church, and that in his will he bequeathed to his wife his second best bed. Let us pass from all these petty details to the next

chapter, where we may at least try to know the truer man.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It may be worth while to mention that over his grave were inscribed the well-known lines said to have been written by the poet himself:

“ Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed heare;  
Blest be the man that spares these stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.”

It may be added that a half-length bust of the poet was placed in the chancel of the church within a few years of his decease; also that his lineaments are preserved with more or less fidelity in portraits, of which that by Martin Droeshout on the title-page of the 1623 Folio is the most reliable. Of the poet's handwriting nothing remains to us but a few abbreviated signatures, from which we gather that he spelt his name *Shakspeare* or *Shakspeare*.

## CHAPTER IV

### BIOGRAPHICAL (LITERARY)

**N**O story of a life has been told so often as this of Shakespeare, yet none has been so difficult to tell; for while the man himself is barely placed upon record, his work remains to us as the greatest mental achievement of all the ages; it is so great in scope and substance, so splendid in form, that we must allow it a position to itself in literature, even if we do not regard it as phenomenal.

Therefore we rest dissatisfied with the meagre facts that form the slender frame-work of the foregoing biography of Shakespeare; as also with the traditions that must be added, however sparingly, to give it a semblance of portraiture: and we look for the fuller and truer life that has written itself down in drama or poem.

Yet herein lies another difficulty, for those sketches of a writer that are drawn chiefly from an appreciation of his work must vary to some extent both in form and colour. I can only trust that my sketch may at least be temperate in execution as it certainly is in design, and it has not been hastily made.

As I have pointed out elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> no imaginative writer, not even the dramatist, if his period of authorship is a long one, and more especially if he writes in verse, can altogether stand aside from his work; and I remarked, "Critics who contend for an absolute objectivity in the writings of Shakespeare forget that they are making a

<sup>1</sup> "The Tempest" (Arden Shakespeare), Introduction pp. xlix-li.

man into a machine; that they are offering an insult to the wisdom of one who was the very wisest of their kind, that they deny him those attributes of a fully endowed mind which at other times they are over-anxious to concede"; and I added that his mere verse writes its long history of emotional development; that his dramatic material and technique, as it advances in subtlety, complexity, and refinement, will be an index of the dramatist's own mental and moral growth; that ultimately style is a revelation of soul.<sup>1</sup> But these are matters that belong rather to the chapters on the Philosophy of Shakespeare and the Art of Shakespeare, and to those chapters I must defer the completion of a portrait that is here sketched in little more than outline.

But as we proceed to trace this outline we are met by another difficulty, for the author of the plays was never a mere beginner; he possessed at the very outset of his literary career a fund of information, a discernment and a command over language that seem to give evidence of some years of study and a considerable experience in more than one kind of literary expression; and we might almost be tempted to imagine that he had tried his prentice hand at prose as well as poetry; indeed he may have begun with prose. But with trifling exceptions, the work he has left us is verse, and verse written at intervals during twenty years at least; yet, again, if we look for the usual signs of immaturity in such a long career of authorship, we shall find them only in part. We turn to Shakespeare's earliest known poetry; he is young as a poet, inexpert in the externals of poetry, but comparatively mature as a prose artist in words, as an observer, and as a thinker. The knowledge displayed in "*Love's Labour's Lost*" is as wide

1

Look, how the father's face  
Lives in his issue, even so the race  
Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines  
In his well turned and true filed lines.—BEN JONSON.

if not so deep as that which we discover in "The Tempest"; the vocabulary, the material, the literary experience—the prose outfit generally—of the earlier play suffers little when compared with the same elements in the later. But although literary progress is harder to trace along these lines, it is most marked if we follow the development of poetic form, and taste, and style; of ethical spirit and purpose; of idealization; and we may add, but with less emphasis, of dramatic technique; under these heads a comparison of "Love's Labour's Lost" with "The Tempest" is barely possible.

But another difficulty, allied to the former, has yet to be mentioned; it illustrates the remark of Dryden, which should be familiar to all of us:

"He is always great when some great occasion is presented to him";

for there are passages in the very earliest plays that give evidence of some kind of maturity, and command a comparison with the finest work of later years: while, on the other hand, certain crudities, foibles, conceits, marks of carelessness and errors in taste may be found here and there in almost any of the most finished plays of Shakespeare's latest period. As an example of a single work in which such contrasts are only too apparent I will mention the Sonnets; in these remarkable poems we either gaze down into depths of inanity or upward to sublimities that reach almost beyond the beam of sight.

In spite of these difficulties we shall be able to sketch with some degree of accuracy, and without any violation of the principles of dramatic criticism, the mental life of the poet during twenty years, and his literary portrait at any given period within those years; this must be clear to all who read carefully the two plays "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "The Tempest," and then the whole series of Shakespeare's dramatic or poetic creations, whose supreme power and charm, I repeat, is the creative

presence of the artist himself, without which all art must lack individuality, and with that its best vitality.

To begin, then, with a suggestion from the former paragraphs, if we put aside the final graces of poetic form, our first glance at almost any of these plays or poems shows us a man who combines a marvellous faculty of expression and a spontaneity real or apparent, with an equally marvellous discipline of thought and command of material. We open at a drama that is thought to be among the very first of Shakespeare's literary experiments, and we read

Subtle as Sphinx, as sweet and musical  
As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair;  
And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods  
Makes heaven drowsy with the harmony.

*Love's Labour's Lost*, IV., iii. 342-5.

Here we have the priceless note of inspiration,—spontaneity that conceals the art which produced it; here a most fluent rhetoric, and, as it happens, a sufficiency of poetic melody and form; here, moreover, the grace and beauty of a fancy and an imagination that have fed for years on the richest fruits of research; and here, finally, a depth of thought that almost sounds the infinite depths of love. And before we leave the passage we have chanced upon as the work of a beginner, we ask wonderingly, "Can this be matched in all literature?" And the answer comes readily enough: "By all means, but only in Shakespeare." And we shall know the man again when we meet with lines like these, as we shall meet them at every turn of the long, delightful way that leads from "Love's Labour's Lost" to "The Tempest."

But, plain as it is to recognize, I care little to know the master-craftsman by his jewels of handiwork; for at every turn of this same way, I see in the artist the man himself, of all this body of beauty the living and abiding soul. Was ever dramatist so delightfully, so divinely undramatic; not *heard*, as we may hear Chapman, or Jon-



son, but ever and again *overheard*, as the artist should be; overheard in the whisper of the *aside*, or the monotone of the soliloquy, or the symphony of the chorûs; overheard in the mutterings of philosophical analysis, or antithetical reflectiveness; in the outbursts of self-examination or self-correction? This is no idle inquiry; the very lines just quoted will lead me on to the abundant proof; what did that audience want to know about love, its multiple and most intricate philosophies, its subtleties as of the Sphinx, its dire discords,<sup>1</sup> and ineffable harmonies, its lights and shadows, depths and heights, its roots in hell, its flowers and fruits in heaven? It was Shakespeare, the poet taught in Paradise not to write plays—these he held more lightly—but to ease his breast of melodies; it was Shakespeare, the poet who stood forsooth on the boards of a theatre, yet sang all these things to himself, but sang them all so sweetly that the very groundlings lent him their ears.

But now to the plain proof; we look dispassionately into this drama of "Love's Labour's Lost," and then into the long list of dramas that follow it; there is scarcely one in which we shall not find these extra-dramatic antitheta,<sup>2</sup> or rather, these antiphonies of love,<sup>3</sup> or if not of love, then of hate, of evil or of good, of sorrow or joy, of life or death. And in this single play where Biron is more or less Shakespeare, we hear other antiphonies—antiphonies of "Study":

Light seeking light doth light of light beguile. . . .

How well he's read, to reason against reading!

<sup>1</sup> "Love is full of unbefitting strains" (two senses), *sqq.* ("Love's Labour's Lost," V. ii. 770-775). This passage should be carefully contrasted with that quoted above (IV. iii. 342-345). See also Chapter VII.

<sup>2</sup> Thus early does Shakespeare adopt that first principle of philosophy—"The only light of every truth is its contrasting error."

<sup>3</sup> Compare "Romeo and Juliet," II. iv. 95. "This drivelling love," etc., with "This bud of love . . . may prove a beauteous flower" (I. ii. 122). See also Chapter VI. sect. 13.

of "verse":

The golden cadence of poesy. . . .

And spend his prodigal wits in bootless rhymes. . . .

of "fashion," etc.:

A man of complements, whom right and wrong  
Have chose as umpire of their mutiny.

of "pastime":

That sport best pleases that doth least know how . . .

and there are dozens of others. And whereas the poet hurls his scorn at "taffeta phrases," he nevertheless fills his play with them, and so to the end of his working days he alternately scoffs at Euphuism or kindred affectations, and fondles them, even if he does not run riot therewithal.

At this point I should notice an objection which is sometimes urged against the practice of quoting an author in support of a suggestion, or to prove an assertion. The objection has some weight when the author is a dramatist whose career, moreover, may be long and varied, his range wide, and whose opinions may—nay, they will—undergo change; and he may share with Shakespeare and Bacon this habit of weighing truth in the scales of antitheta. For all this, our quotations will be both reliable and convincing if while we quote we keep within view, as far as possible, the whole of the writer's productions.

Let us now make experiment of another of the dramas—say "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; what shall we find here of the man within the artist, his soul of truth within the body of beauty? Here at times the Duke is spokesman for the poet, when the poet forgets to be dramatist; hear these balanced opinions on the former subject of love:

Poor fancy's followers. . . .

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends. . .

The lover, all as frantic,  
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.

and then, as it were, in self-correction:

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind. . . .

or again,

In maiden meditation, fancy-free. . . .

and then, in striking contrast:

But earthlier-happy is the rose distill'd. . . .

and now as the final conviction, is this, the fruition of all:

Now fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour  
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in  
Another moon; but oh, methinks how slow  
This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires.

Or these on the subject of the drama:

This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard. . . .

The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them.

Still more striking are the antitheta of poetry. Against:

With feigning (two senses)<sup>1</sup> voice verses of feigning love.

<sup>1</sup> *Vid.* 'Tis poetical. *Opp.* It is the more like to be feigned. ("Twelfth Night," I v. 208). Nothing else but feigned history; (Bacon, *Of Poetry*, "Advancement of Learning," II. iii. iv. 2). But we are almost on the side of the plaintiff, for, "The truest poetry is the most feigning" ("As You Like It," III. iii. 20); so also in Bacon, "poesy feigneth acts and events greater and more heroical"; "poesy feigns them more just," etc., etc. This analysis of poetry which makes feigning its fundamental element is, of course, Greek, and Bacon's imperfect definition of poetry as "nothing else but feigned history" is merely a compression of Aristotle's "τούτω διαφέρει τῇ τὸν μὲν τὰ ἐνόμενα λέγειν, τὸν δὲ ὅσα ἂν γένοιτο. διὸ καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποιήσεις ἱστορίας ἴσθιν." (*Poetic*, ix.). As I may have to repeat before I finish this book, the wonder is that with such an imperfect estimate of the ideal in poetry and the drama, Shakespeare nevertheless produced such masterpieces in those arts.

Against :

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact.

For :

The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

Against :

Such tricks hath strong imagination. . . .

The well-known lines above quoted—"The poet's eye," etc.—form one of those extra-dramatic passages—ex-crescent, that is, from the true dramatic growth that are so frequent in the plays of Shakespeare ;<sup>1</sup> we will examine it carefully. It has nothing to do with the dramatic action, but everything to do with Shakespeare ; this we might discover merely by comparing it with the passage in praise of poetry omitted by Jonson from "Every Man in his Humour" ; besides, it does not fall naturally from the lips of Theseus, for we note the succeeding antithesis, "Such tricks," etc., and its totally different rhythm ; moreover, Theseus himself is a lover, and the speech he is forced to deliver pays a very poor compliment to his queen.

But, as a fact, the passage with its context, is a complete network of the lights and shadows that are cast singly on the subject of poetry in other plays ; it is the whole philosophy of poetry as Shakespeare knew it at the time of writing, and its expression is due to the man Shakespeare, not to his drama "A Midsummer Night's Dream."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some of these, especially in the later plays, may be due to the influence of Greek tragedy ; they are often chorus-like, personal, topical.

<sup>2</sup> Other ex-crescent passages in this play are those concerned with the wet season, "love-in-idleness," etc. (see sect. 15) ; some in the remaining plays are

So again these lights and shadows of love, the drama, poetry, flicker through the sonnets, where a studied self-effacement often ends in self-revelation, and disguise so patent that it puts an end to all concealment; much, I think, as when Hamlet takes an internal survey of himself, and exaggerates his faults beyond all recognition, till we suspect that Shakespeare has some interest in the caricature; so Gray disguised himself in the Epitaph that closes his "Elegy"; so also Prospero reveals the author of "The Tempest" by more than one act or word of intended concealment.

As to "Hamlet," that play might almost be regarded as Shakespeare's "Apologia pro Vita Sua," as one long self-explaining soliloquy; for although the reflections of Hamlet are mostly consistent with his dramatic evolution, while those of other characters in the play have generally a bearing on his reflectiveness, he is evolved not by himself, but by an artist who is deeply and, as it seems, personally interested in the proceeding; and as I have pointed out in Chap. VI, § 28, the character of Hamlet was never finished, for no man may finish a portrait of himself to his own satisfaction; there must be too much of colour or too little, or such a man is insufferably proud of himself or of his self-abnegation.

The scope of my book does not allow me to investigate fully the subject of Shakespeare as manifest in his work; therefore, putting aside the larger mass of evidence, yet keeping in view my present purpose, I have now to ask this question--"Assuming that such glimpses of the man Shakespeare are obtainable, what sort of man is he?"

Possibly the best answer that we can give to this question will take the form of another question: Does a careful reading of the plays, an examination into their methods, the manner and the matter of their thought, their excres-

noticed elsewhere in this book. See also "The Tempest," Arden Shakespeare, Introduction, pp. lviii-lxx,

cent passages, the untheatrical garb—or partly such—of some of their personages, their frequent asides or undramatic or chorus-like utterances—do any or all of these suggest some prominent character or characters that seem to reflect the main features of the dramatist himself? To this question I believe the sternest adherent of an impersonal Shakespeare will answer, there are two, Hamlet and Prospero. And here, as it now occurs to me, is an interesting particular; each of these characters concerns himself with the drama and stage-representation; brings about a performance indeed; discusses the whole business of the theatre. Hamlet, with some degree of enthusiasm, Prospero, like a man who has had enough of it, who, while he condescends to entertain the young lovers with “some vanity of mine art,” nevertheless at the conclusion of the performance insists on its vanity, and, with that, on the seeming vanity of the whole drama of life.

We may next note that each has been a student, and has a leaning towards the life of a student. Further, if we select key words that fall from the lips of these characters, words that have a first bearing on our subject, they are—of Hamlet—“Thou would’st not think how ill all’s here about my heart,” and of Prospero, “My old brain is troubled.”<sup>1</sup> But, granting that we have here some echo of the voice of Shakespeare, is it surprising? are not these the key words of every deep thinker—and Shakespeare, we must remember, is the deepest thinker of them all. Yet we must not forget to supply the antithesis in the two cases I have mentioned; of Hamlet, “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends”; of Prospero, “By Providence divine were we help hither.” Thus each of these characters bows down not as a religionist, but as a philosopher, before the awful mystery of our being; but each again rises in his stronger mood, and not as a philosopher nor a religionist,

<sup>1</sup> For the meaning, see note in my edition of “*The Tempest*,” Arden Shakespeare, Introduction, p. lxii.

while the God within him answers, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your (*i.e.*, your boasted) philosophy."

Now this character of Hamlet or Prospero, the character of student, thinker, philosopher, which nevertheless takes count of imperative human limitations, and the no less imperative divine intuitions and divine possibilities, is the character—so I read it—of the man who writes these plays, but lapses often as he writes into some undramatic underthought—nay, rises above his drama on some sublime overthought; in fact, he is too deep a thinker and too great a poet to be a mere objective dramatist—if such there has been or could be ever.

There are other opinions; some regard Shakespeare as a man of the world, a wild liver, a light thinker, a heavy drinker, and so forth. In the absence of proof to the contrary, it is at least pleasant—perhaps also of some profit—to believe that the work does not altogether belie the man, nor the man the work. But now let me seriously repeat that no dramatist—no great dramatist—no great *poetic* dramatist—is absolutely a machine for making plays; in one *poetic* drama we greet him and hear his voice and shake him by the hand; but give him two decades of authorship, and we have known him intimately for as many years.

But again, to detach the ever-recurring undramatic thought, and so to construct the complete mental individuality of Shakespeare is beyond my limits, and I can do little more than suggest its plausibility. I may add, however, that while Hamlet and Prospero are the two characters sketched by Shakespeare as I believe with some consciousness of sympathy or self-introspection, they are nevertheless the only two; and that as regards the rest, whatever personal characteristics they present were added by the poet sub-consciously; they may speak to us at rare intervals with the voice of Shakespeare, but

they speak far less distinctly. Still, it may be added that most of his leading characters—Brutus, Othello, and the like—bear out the well-known testimony of Ben Jonson: "He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature." These words remind us of Othello, who was of "a free and noble nature," or of the sketch of a perfect gentleman that appears twice in "Twelfth Night": (a) "generous, guiltless, and of free disposition" (b) "virtuous . . . noble . . . free, learn'd, and valiant"; or of Hamlet, as in IV. 135-136.

These three considerations, therefore, of excrescent passages, recurrent thoughts, methods, philosophies, and what I have called the voice of Shakespeare as we seem to hear it at times from the lips of this or that character in the plays, will chiefly guide me as I attempt to delineate more exactly the personality of the poet.

I venture to believe that he was poet and philosopher first, and playwright only second; that drama and the theatre were his pastime and his business, not his life; or shall we say that like Prospero, he lived two lives, one in the world, and one in himself. If occasionally he deprecates and depreciates poetry and philosophic thought, he nevertheless, as we have seen, gives his best opinion in their favour,<sup>1</sup> and with some undisguised enthusiasm; but his contemptuous references to the drama are not so fully and finally corrected. Nevertheless, as his remarks in "Hamlet" may seem to prove, he had a real, a moral interest in the dramatic art and in stage representation.

Next, we have before us a man who nowhere identifies himself with the people—let us translate the word into his own language, "the rank-scented many"—but writes rather as from some higher grade of society. Of course he has an astonishing acquaintance with every rank of life, even to royalty; an acquaintance also with the whole business

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, "The Tempest," I. ii. 66-76, 164-170; also Chapters VII. and VIII.



of life, its trades, its professions, medical, legal,<sup>1</sup> and the rest; its scientific thought and fact, its philosophic imaginings; its notable and its notorious men and women; but he lived in a narrower world than ours, and such knowledge was easier to gain. Moreover, his mind is as creative as it is receptive, and for the most part adds magnificently where it borrows, whether from the world around it or from books.

The sea he knew, and ships, and sea-faring; this knowledge he may have gained near London. If not a traveller himself (Chap. VI., § 20), he must have listened to the tales of travellers with a curious and persistent attention, for his knowledge of foreign parts has often the stamp of an eye-witness.

As to his reading, we have said that it was wide from the first; the famous "small Latin and less Greek" gives us a wrong impression of Shakespeare's classical knowledge; coming from a scholar like Ben Jonson—in whatever mood—the statement is certainly misleading; if Shakespeare could not write Latin, he had certainly read a good deal, and read it carefully; he knew the language well enough to enrich his writing of English with Latin word-elements, Latin constructions, Latin idioms, and here and there with Latin thought; his knowledge of Greek was not so wide, but enough to give him some sort of access to Greek literature. Certainly, he prefers translations, and will often copy their errors;<sup>2</sup> yet at other times he will correct and supplement. In "The Tempest," for

<sup>1</sup> His familiarity with the law is proved by the extraordinary amount of imagery he derives from it. But he seems to have known everything; he was familiar with history and philosophy, the arts, the sciences, medicine, politics, the court, the camp, the sea, the lands beyond it, the nobles, the people, demonology, astrology, folk-lore, and indeed "whatsoever can be taught and known."

<sup>2</sup> This not only in the classics, but in modern languages also; see my note on Montaigne's "Nulles occupations qu'oyssives" ("The Tempest," Arden ed., p. 55).

instance, I pointed out <sup>1</sup> that in the famous address to the Elves, he used both Ovid and Golding. From the same play I will choose examples of his mode of dealing with classical materials, as where he turns the Latin "*invidiosa vetustas*" ("*Metamorphoses*," xv. 234), by the hendiadys "age and envy,"<sup>2</sup> or where his oxymoron "baked with frost," (I. ii. 236), recalls the "*obusta gelu*" of Ovid (*Tristia*," V. ii. 66), or his "*nec . . . frigus adurat*" ("*Metamorphoses*," xiv. 763), or Virgil's "*frigus adurat*," or Livy's "*torrida gelu*." But the passage quoted above from "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" will furnish a still better example; there we have the poet's "fine frenzy," which may be traced with variations to Aristotle, Plato, Democritus, etc., while the phrase may also be contrasted with the "*vesanum poetam*" of Horace.

But this passage is so full of Shakespeare's curious learning, and is otherwise so important, that I will make it an example and deal with it more critically; and let me remind the student that there are hundreds of others which in like manner reveal their author and disclose the same beauties of detail when placed under the critical microscope. But first we will examine it as it were with the naked eye, and note that it begins with the commonplace and the euphuism "apprehends," etc., rises to the highest height of poetry, and sinks down again as suddenly to euphuism, commonplace, and rhyme. The very context, therefore, proclaims its special if not personal character, and almost its appearance of interpolation. But this context must also be put under the microscope, for as every student of literature knows, interpretation of poetry lies in the context, and after that in the whole work and habit of the poet. Let us begin with lines 4-6:

<sup>1</sup> Arden ed., p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> "*The Tempest*," I. ii. 258. Such examples are very frequent. Here, of course, in his usual manner, while recalling the Latin, Shakespeare allows the word "envy" an independent meaning of "malice."

4. Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
5. Such shaping fantasies that apprehend
6. More than cool reason ever comprehend<sup>s</sup>.

Here "seething brains," the antithesis of "cool reason" (see "Othello," I. iii. 330-337), may be an instance of Shakespeare's scholarship, whether direct or indirect; for he recurs to the notion on many occasions. But first for the notion itself; it was the doctrine of Plato, who made a three-fold division of the human mind—λογιστικόν, θυμοειδές, and ἐπιθυμητικόν (so the animal part of the soul was divided into θυμός and ἐπιθυμία); and this doctrine in old or new associations we find frequently in Shakespeare. Thus the "seething brains" of this passage are the "boiling brains" <sup>1</sup> of "The Tempest" (v. 59), the "brain fuming" of "Antony and Cleopatra," II. i. 24, "A bolt of nothing . . . which the brain makes of fumes" in "Cymbeline," IV. ii. 301; and from these we pass to "the ventricle of memory . . . the womb of pia mater" in "Love's Labour's Lost," IV. ii. 73, 74, and from this again to "Macbeth," I. vii. 65-67:

Memory, the warder of the brain,  
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason  
A limbec only,

where the first thought is little more than repeated in the second; and from this yet again we return to "The Tempest," and in the context of the "boiling brains" quoted above we read "the ignorant fumes that mantle their clearer reason." Now it is quite characteristic of Shakespeare to associate Plato with crude notions of anatomy, Arabian or mediaeval or others; and to extend the connotations of θυμός; but I may not pursue the subject further. For we have to notice an expression which recurs more than once in the passage, an expression of equal interest and equal profundity, viz. "shaping (*i.e.*, "capable of giving form to things non-existent") fantasies" (l. 5).

<sup>1</sup> The Folio reading "boile" I prefer to Rowe's emendation "boil'd."

This takes us at once to "love . . . full of strange shapes . . . forms," in "Love's Labour's Lost" (V. ii. 773), and to "Twelfth Night," (I. i. 24, 25):

So full of shapes is fancy,  
That it alone is high fantastical,

*i.e.*, love is so full of imaginings that beyond all other passions it is a slave to imagination, fancies, etc.; it is "of imagination all compact." Shakespeare's opinions of love, poetry, the drama—especially in his earlier works—are often formed on classic models, and thus easily he links the madman with the lover and the poet; again we refer to Plato—Τρίτη δὲ ἀπὸ Μουσῶν κατοκωχὴ τε καὶ μανία<sup>1</sup> (Phaedrus, 245 A); and as to Shakespeare's use of the words "fancy," "fantasy," "form," "shape," "imagination," and the rest, we may add Plato's ὕστερον γεγονὸς εἰδωλὸν, and φαντάσματα γὰρ ἀλλ' οὐκ ὄντα ποιοῦσιν.

I have already noticed the forced antithesis between "apprehend" and "comprehend" (they imagine much more than calm reason recognizes as actual fact), which is repeated later; but further, it is an example of Shakespeare's subtlety in the use of words, wherewith he often "tracks suggestion to her inmost cell," and not infrequently with the aid of some earlier or more literal sense of the term. Even the word "compact" is a participle left in its Latin form; it often occurs; in "Venus and Adonis" we read: "Love is a spirit all compact of fire."

7. The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
8. Are of imagination all compact;
9. One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;
10. That is, the madman; the other, all as frantic,
11. Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.

As to these three being made up of imagination, we may refer to "Love is a madness most discreet" ("Romeo

<sup>1</sup> λαβούσα ἀπαλὴν καὶ ἄβυστον ψυχὴν, ἐγείρουσα καὶ ἐκβαρκεύουσα κατὰ τὴν ἡδύα, καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ποιήσιν. For Plutarch, see Chapter VI., sect. 15.

and Juliet," I. i. 197); then to "With great imagination proper to madmen" ("II. Henry IV," I. iii. 32); and here we add Bacon's "Poetic Vinum Daemonum; because it filleth the Imagination, and yet it is but with the shadow of a Lie" (Essay "Of Truth"). "One sees more devils," may have a history, or it may not; it may refer to Lodge's pamphlet, "Wits Miserie, and the World's Madnesse; discovering the Incarnate Devils of this Age." This pamphlet was not printed till 1596, which seems too late for the reference, unless again this passage is an interpolation. As to "brow of Egypt" (face of a gipsy), it illustrates the prejudice against the "swarthy Moor," which is dramatized in "Titus Andronicus" and "Othello," and poetized in the "dark lady" of the Sonnets; here we may compare "Dido would be a dowdy, Cleopatra a gipsy, Helen and Hero hildings, Thisbe a grey eye or so, but not to the purpose" ("Romeo and Juliet," II. iv. 43).

To continue :

11. The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,

12. Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.

The "rolling eye" may be found in "King John," IV. ii. 192, or better, in the parallel passage quoted above from "Love's Labour's Lost" (V. ii. 774); but we are most concerned with the "fine frenzy" already commented upon; and in this more detailed examination of the passage much remains to be said. "Fine" is alliterative; it means "of higher quality" as opposed to the other two kinds of madness; and it replaces the adjective "divine," which is often attached to "phrenzy," "furor," etc. Other cases in Shakespeare are, "The finest mad devil that ever governed frenzy" ("Merry Wives of Windsor," V. i. 19-20); and for "frenzy," "that mouldeth goblins swift as frenzy's thoughts" ("Troilus and Cressida," V. x. 29). By the way, in "Troilus and Cressida," V. iii. 85, we have a form of "antique" (l. 2 in this passage) and this "frenzy" together

—"Frenzy and amazement like witless antics one another meet"; "antique," etc., often means "uncommon" as "modern" sometimes means "common." And now for the "fine frenzy"; it is Aristotle who calls the poet a frenzied man,<sup>1</sup> and for the "fine,"<sup>2</sup> as also for "Doth glance from heaven to earth," etc., Aristotle's ἐνθεον γὰρ ἡ ποιήστις (Rhetoric, III. 7. 11) will serve our turn, as doubtless it served Shakespeare's and Bacon's—"Heaven-bred poesy" ("Two Gentlemen of Verona," III. ii. 72); "It hath some participation of divineness. . . Divine poesy" ("Advancement of Learning"), but probably in this famous line (13) we have also Shakespeare's best conception of the Platonic "ideas" and our modern "ideals" (see also Chap. VI. § 15). Here, too, we may add Cicero, who repeats much of the Greek of Aristotle,—"Saepe audiui, poetam bonum neminem, id quod a Democrito et Platone in scriptis relictum esse dicunt, sine inflammatione animorum existere posse, et sine quodam afflatu quasi furoris" (De Orat. II. 46). With this compare "Nemo vir magnus sine aliquo adflatu divino unquam fuit" (N.D. II. 66). Also "ea (praesagitio) si exarsit acrius, furor appellatur, cum a corpore animus abstractus divino instinctu concitatur" (Div. I. 31, 66); "negat sine furore Democritus quemquam poetam magnum esse posse" (ib. I. 37, 38); (also Democritus in "Clem. of Alexandria," Strom. VI. 698 B., ποιητῆς δὲ ἅσσα μὲν ἂν γράφῃ μετ' ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ ἱεροῦ πνεύματος, καλὰ κάρτα ἔστιν).

14. And, as imagination bodies forth

15. The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen

<sup>1</sup> εὐφροσύνης ἡ ποιητικὴ ἔστιν ἢ μανικὴ (i.e., artist or enthusiast, cultivated or inspired; Poet. XVII. 4, and not without its bearing on our passage is what follows, τούτων γὰρ οἱ μὲν εὐπλάστοι, οἱ δὲ ἐκστατικοί εἰσιν), also cf. Phaedrus, 245 A, and 256 B.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also Drayton's well known lines on Marlowe:

For that fine madness still he did retaine

Which rightly should possesse a poet's braine.

(Epistle, "To my dearly loved friend Henry Reynolds, of Prose and Poesie.")

16. Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing

17. A local habitation and a name.

We seldom examine a passage in Shakespeare (see remarks on "To be or not to be," Chap. VI. § 28) without coming upon an instance of his word-play or ambiguity; an example occurs in the last line but one of this speech, where we meet with the pendent or ambiguous participle "imagining"; this doubtful use of a participle is prominent among Shakespeare's characteristic methods—at least, as we find them in his earlier writings—of making language conceal his thoughts. And in line 14 some ambiguity attaches to the word "imagination"; one interpretation of the passage may be as follows: "and whereas by the faculty of imagination we worldlings may but dimly conjure up within the mind airy existences, the poet does more; he embodies for us in musical and pictorial language each vision as it gathers shape in his soul, and thus he assigns a permanent place in the region of fact and of thought to that which otherwise would have remained intangible and imperceptible as the air." But another interpretation is possible. Supply the word *his* before *imagination*, and then we may suppose that the creative process is marked by two distinct stages; in the first the poet dimly outlines his conception in his own mind; in the second he embodies the conception in some external form. It is very possible that Shakespeare wished his words to lend themselves to both interpretations.

We may now return to the classical antecedents of "shaping fantasies," "imagination bodies forth" . . . "forms of things unknown," etc.; but we will take Bacon on the way; with regard to poesy, the "*vinum daemonum*" which "filleth the imagination and yet it is but with the shadow of a lie ('which is but—according to the Latin—the shadow of a lie')," he is careful to imply in the context that this lie "passeth through the mind"—"come like shadows, so depart—"; and yet elsewhere he admits "it

doth raise and erect the mind by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind, whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind to the nature of things." And in the play ("A Midsummer Night's Dream") the connection between this shadow of Bacon and the imagination is made in the passage, "The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them." Here I may repeat Plato's "ἕσπερον γεγνός εἰδωλον, or his φαντάσματα γὰρ ἀλλ' οὐκ ὄντα ποίουσιν (p. 41); though these extracts refer more especially to the "shaping fantasies that apprehend," etc.; still, they apply also to the "shapes" and the "airy nothing" in these lines. More apt, however, are the words of Aristotle, Poet., XVII. 4, to which may again be added Phaedrus 245 A. and 256 B.; and for the whole subject of forms, ideas, "shadowy recollections," and the like, we may refer to "Love's Labour's Lost," IV. ii. 70-77, where we have the Western and the Eastern notions, the Platonic and the Arabian, side by side.

Finally, from the context I quote :

18. Such tricks hath strong imagination,
19. That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
20. It comprehends some bringer of that joy,

to which I will now add the parallel lines 5 and 6 above; for in these we have the central thought of the whole passage, and—from one point of view—of the whole play. It is expressed thus by Bacon: "The use of this feigned history hath been to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it" (see also former quotation from Bacon, "poesy feigneth, etc.," page 32, note 1; and this again is Aristotle's *τούτῳ διαφέρει*, etc., in the same note).

I have now reached the end of this celebrated speech (see also Chap. VI., § 15), and though much remains to be said, I must leave it, while I repeat that there are hundreds



of such passages, which give like results when examined, and that Shakespeare is full of such classical elements. But further, he draws on occasion from the more recondite classical sources, and at times he seems purposely to avoid the more obvious. Doubtless he has long been accustomed to hoard up both literary treasure-trove and the merest materials of literary expression; he is further accustomed to economize their use, to make them multi-form, and doubly and trebly and sometimes doubtfully suggestive.

As to modern languages, he must have studied in their Italian originals some of the stories on which his plots are formed; and a certain familiarity with French—perhaps also Spanish—is suggested by several of his plays. But the subject of Shakespeare's literary outfit cannot be pursued further in this chapter, and for fuller particulars I may refer to Chapter VIII.

But I must make some reference to his dealings with nature, by which a poet's temperament may often be tested, although this subject also receives special notice in the chapter just cited. Let us ask first what Milton intended by "woodnotes wild";<sup>1</sup> was it an overdrawn contrast with Jonson's "learned sock"? did he look upon Shakespeare as a loving and an accurate observer of the natural world, and regard this fidelity to nature as the most striking feature of his work? Doubtless Milton meant both more<sup>2</sup> and less than this; but assuming that the above interpretation unfolds some of his meaning, we go on to remark that just as Shakespeare's work in most cases presents the appearance of spontaneity, so his tran-

Sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,  
Warbled his native wood-notes wild.

*L'Allegro.*

Cf. the words of his "Epitaph on Shakespeare":

To the shame of slow endeavouring art  
Thy easy numbers flow.

scripts from nature may look real, even when they are not; but they do this because of the perfection of their ideal setting. In fact, he treats the natural world as we have seen him treat the classics; he takes only what suits his purpose, and often what is least obvious; and if his bird or beast or flower is to be found in book or fable more readily than in field or grove, he cares not; and—as in his copying of translations—whether it is right or wrong he cares not,<sup>1</sup> for he seldom fails to make it both—I can use no better words—intensely and most aptly poetical.

I will explain this more clearly; Ben Jonson, for example, though he writes less than Shakespeare, yet puts into his verse a much larger number of buds and blossoms; but few if any of these possess that indefinable poetic truth and beauty which makes the humblest weed in Shakespeare immortal. Here are Jonson's daffodils:

The chequered and purple-ringed daffodillies."

Whatever the poetic value of this line—and opinion may differ—it is wholly destroyed by the context which laboriously catalogues its flowers by the dozen, till not one of them has a tinge of the ideal. Now look at Shakespeare's flower, and you wear it on your heart for ever:

Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty.

That Shakespeare loved nature and observed her ways I have no doubt whatever,<sup>2</sup> but his bookish—at least his

<sup>1</sup> When Tennyson writes of the nightingale: "Rapt in *her* song," we are not shocked as we reflect that the male bird is the songster; have we not heard Philomel singing throughout the ages in that sad plight of hers; or when the same poet says, "we will live like two birds in one nest," we thank him for a fallacy which makes excellent poetry.

<sup>2</sup> But again, he makes the strictest *dramatic* use of this knowledge of nature; he never parades it; he takes what suits his purpose, but no more. Yet his reference to the natural world will always be intensely poetical—that first. This also we must bear in mind; accurate and direct observation of

composite—method will be better understood if I compare it with some modern work—say Tennyson's; and it will be observed that in respect of vigour, and power, and poetry Shakespeare has the advantage even over the exact and direct transcripts of such a nature student as the author of "The Talking Oak":

- (a) Like to a vagabond flag upon the stream  
Goes to and back, lackeying the varying tide  
To rot itself with motion.

*Antony and Cleopatra*, I. iv. 45.

- (a) Still hither, thither, idly sway'd  
Like those long mosses in the stream.

*The Miller's Daughter*.

- (b) And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed  
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,  
Wouldst thou not stir in this.

*Hamlet*, I. v. 32-34.

- (b) About a stone-cast from the wall  
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,  
And o'er it many, round and small,  
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.

*Mariana*

- (c) He makes sweet music with the enamelled stones,  
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge  
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage.

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II. vii. 25.

- (c)            The brook that loves  
To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand,  
Or dimple in the dusk of rushy coves.

*Ode to Memory*.

But I may point out that Shakespeare's faculty of observation is perhaps more marked in his dealings with the trite, the prosaic regions of the natural world; what poet

nature was then almost unknown; only an age of science could produce a Tennyson; but that Shakespeare was a pioneer in this direction may be discovered by comparing him with Spenser, and the utterly grotesque trees of the "Faerie Queene," I. i. 8, o.

ever drew such rich and varied imagery from the common objects of our daily life? here are two or three kindred examples:

You shall see him laugh till his face be like a wet cloak ill laid up.

I am withered like an old apple-john, crestfallen as a dried pear.

He does smile his face into more lines than is in the new map with the augmentation of the Indies.

We may say, finally, that no other writer has ever made such ample use of his powers of observation; indeed, the best means in general of identifying the work of Shakespeare is by tracing his intimate acquaintance with the world around us, and his methods of weaving its materials almost everywhere into the texture of his verse; and I may add that this infinite resource of nature-painting and of figurative expression generally, separates the work of Shakespeare not only from the work of all his contemporaries, but also from that of all poets, whether his fore-runners or his followers.

Yet it is as the observer of human nature that this great poet is most certainly without a rival; merely to mention Falstaff and Mistress Quickly, is to furnish proof incontestable. But this faculty enabled him also to give a semblance of real life to the personages of history and fiction who throng his stage; there they live and move and renew their being; and this is one explanation of the statement so often made, that Shakespeare gives us truer pictures of life and manners than either the historian or the novelist. And even when he lends a character something as from himself, the likeness is no more distorted than when he adds or takes away from the bare fact of beast or bird or flower; we feel no surprise when we read of Prospero's "infirmity,"<sup>1</sup> or of honey bees that have a king and officers of sorts;<sup>2</sup> we take into account the con-

<sup>1</sup> See "The Tempest," Arden Edition, p. lxi.

<sup>2</sup> A reminiscence of Pliny and Lyly.

text, and in either instance are delighted by the excellence of the poetry.

But I will now close this brief estimate with a few suggestions set down more at random. That Shakespeare was a patriot, that he loved England, and believed her to be the champion of Christendom and a mother of nations, may be gathered from such plays as "King John," "Richard II," and "Henry V"; and from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and elsewhere we learn that he had as much as was becoming to a philosopher, of that chivalrous devotion to a maiden Queen which was, perhaps, the best safeguard of his country in those perilous times. Of his political and social opinions<sup>1</sup> I have remarked already (page 37) that they were discoloured by some tinge of feudalism; that he scarcely regarded the people as a member of the body politic, though some recognition of their growing importance might have been expected from him; and of course he has not quite our conception of the brotherhood of mankind. His concern is for Church and State, for law and order; finally, in the just phrase of Coleridge, he is a "philosophical aristocrat."

Of Shakespeare's personal appearance we conjecture little from his plays; and the "Sonnets" disguise the man more completely than they conceal his mind; but we like to believe<sup>2</sup> that he had a noble presence. He should have been a good horseman, and versed in—perhaps fond of—field sports, the pastimes of the wealthy, their hunting and their hawking, but he scarcely pursued these sports with mere brute ardour, for he had infinite compassion on the creatures of the chase.

His life, moreover, must have been studious in great part; but study by no means robbed him of common

<sup>1</sup> See also Chapter VI.

<sup>2</sup> I attach little importance to traditions to the contrary; "good shape, good parts," writes John Davies in 1603 ("Microcosmos"). His portraits may not always be reliable, but they must approximate to the truth.

sense—that faculty possessed by the few of rightly applying the truths which are obvious to all. His memory was marvellous, but though assisted by many devices of written method, it did not swamp his originality. He should have been a good talker and a good listener, and he may have possessed some gift of oratory. As an actor he had a fine critical taste, whatever the scope of his performance.

From his poetry we learn that he was a lover of beauty, and of the arts that are its minister and expression; but he seems to have been curiously—it may have been conventionally<sup>1</sup>—aloof from the dramatic art which was his main business for some twenty years.

The priceless humour that not only fills the comedies, but adds the last hope of earth and the first glimpse of heaven to the great tragedies, was surely a saving merit of his daily life: he must have been genial, large-hearted, kindly with his kind; he must have been reverent to age, courteous to man, gentle to woman, youthful with the young, even childlike with children. And finally, to him the rarer action was in virtue,<sup>2</sup> as we judge from the moral tone of the plays, and from the same we gather that his experience, if it made him a little sad, left him also wise, noble and loveable.

*When life's long burden hangeth heavily  
I muse that thou hast lived, beloved guide;  
And when I meet my doom, so let me be  
Content to die, Master, for thou hast died.*

<sup>1</sup> "In modern states play-acting is esteemed but as a toy, except when it is too satirical and biting." . . . "Though it (*Actio theatralis*) be of ill repute as a profession. . . ."—BACON.

<sup>2</sup> "The Tempest," V. i. 27-28. He differs from all other dramatists of his time in thoughtfulness, tolerance, good temper, creation of the ideal, grasp of truth, and height of moral tone.

## CHAPTER V

## THE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE; A SUMMARY

THIS summary of the writings of Shakespeare may serve as an introduction to the more detailed account which will be found in the following chapter.

The works of an author should always be surveyed as nearly as possible in the order of their production; unfortunately, in the case of Shakespeare, we have very few chronological facts to guide us. Of his earlier literary training we know little or nothing; but granting that all his maturer writings have come down to us,<sup>1</sup> we may safely assume the existence at one time of a mass of experimental work, prose as well as verse, some of which he himself withheld, while the rest has perished. In those days a large proportion even of printed matter, especially dramatic, was lost sight of as the years drew by, and I have no doubt that it included some of Shakespeare's literary exercises. Apart from this, he would certainly have lent his hand to the composition of several dramas that bore the names of other writers, and we know that he was often engaged in re-casting or re-touching dramatic work already existing. The play of "Henry VI" may serve to illustrate each of these contingencies, for in one or another of its three parts we have Shakespeare as a reviser—sometimes a joint one—of work to which he had formerly been a contributor. In this play, of which a

<sup>1</sup> Possibly the "Love's Labour's Won" mentioned by Meres has not. But see Chapter VI. sect. 17.

fuller account is given in the next chapter, we have possibly the earliest extant work of Shakespeare, and, conjecturally, some part of it may be assigned to the year 1590; and we can hardly get nearer to the starting-point of Shakespeare's career.

But at this stage of our inquiry we have to bear in mind that the date assigned to a play may be variously determined; it may be that of composition or revision, or of the acting or of the publication of the play. To begin with the latter: the plays of Shakespeare, as everyone knows, were first collected and published in a folio volume in the year 1623, while about half of them appeared in quarto form during the poet's lifetime, and often without his name. Another of the earliest plays, "Love's Labour's Lost," illustrates all these points; it was written, let us say, in 1590, acted, possibly, in 1591, more certainly in 1598, and not long after was published as a quarto volume bearing Shakespeare's name, and on the title-page of this volume it was described as being "newly corrected and augmented," and finally it took its place in the volume of 1623.

From all this we learn something important; "Love's Labour's Lost" is frequently spoken of as the earliest of Shakespeare's dramatic efforts, a young man's frolic in fun, euphuism, satire, and so forth. If the work of a beginner, it is certainly a marvel, as may be seen by comparing it with the mature work of almost any of Shakespeare's contemporaries. But it was revised up to 1598, by which time its author was thirty-four years of age. Let us say, therefore, that the period of authorship represented by "Love's Labour's Lost" is somewhat doubtful, and that it can scarcely be regarded as Shakespeare's earliest attempt at drama.

I will now present in tabular form the writings of Shakespeare arranged as far as possible in chronological order.



## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

<i>The Works of Shakespeare</i>			<i>Contemporary Events</i>	
	Written (about)	Printed		
			Shakespeare born . . .	1564
			Lyly, "Euphues" . . .	1579
			Shakespeare marries . . .	1582
			Leaves Stratford . . .	1586
			Marlowe, "Tamburlaine" . . . . .	1587
Henry VI. Part I. . .	1590	1623	Spenser, "Faerie Queene" . . .	1590
Titus Andronicus . .	"	1600	Sidney, "Arcadia" . . .	"
The Comedy of Errors	1591	1623	Lyly, "Endymion" . . .	1591
Love's Labour's Lost	"	1598*	"Astrophel and Stella" . .	"
Henry VI. Part II. .	1592	1623	Kyd, "Spanish Tragedie" . .	1592
Henry VI. Part III. .	"	"	Nash, "Pierce Penniless" . .	"
The Two Gentlemen of Verona . . . . .	"	"	Marlowe, "Edward II." . .	"
Venus and Adonis. .	1593	1593*	Marlowe died (June). . .	1593
			"Hero and Leander" (two sestiams) . . . . .	"
Richard III. . . . .	"	1597	Hooker, "Ecclesiastical Polity" (I.-IV.). . . . .	1594
The Rape of Lucrece	1594	1594*	Bacon, "Promus" . . . . .	"
Sonnets (about). . .	"	1609*	"Willobie his Avisa" . . .	"
Richard II. . . . .	"	1597	Spenser, "Amoretti" . . .	1595
A Midsummer Night's Dream . . . . .	"	1600*	Sidney, "Apologie for Poetrie" . . . . .	"
Romeo and Juliet . .	1595	1597	"Edward III." (printed) . .	1596
All's Well that Ends Well . . . . .	"	1623	"Swan" theatre . . . . .	"
King John . . . . .	1596	"	Shakespeare purchases New Place, Stratford. . .	1597
The Taming of the Shrew . . . . .	"	"	Bacon, "Essays," etc. . .	"
The Merchant of Venice . . . . .	"	1600*	Jonson, "Every Man in his Humour" (acted). . .	1598
Henry IV. Part I. . .	1597	1598	Chapman, "Iliad" (seven books) . . . . .	"
Henry IV. Part II. .	"	1600	"The Passionate Pil- grim" . . . . .	1599
The Merry Wives of Windsor . . . . .	1598	1602	Globe Theatre opened . .	"
Henry V. . . . .	1599	1600*	Spenser died . . . . .	"
Much Ado about Nothing . . . . .	"	1600*		

## *The Works of Shakespeare; a Summary* 55

<i>The Works of Shakespeare</i>		<i>Contemporary Events</i>	
	Written (about)	Printed	
<i>As You Like It</i> . . .	1600	1623	Jonson's "Every Man out of his Humour" . . . 1600
<i>Twelfth Night</i> . . .	"	"	Chester's "Love's Martyr" . . . 1601
<i>Julius Caesar</i> . . .	1601	"	"Poetaster"; "Satiromastix" . . . 1602
<i>Hamlet</i> . . . . .	1602	1603-4*	"JAMES I." (March) . . . 1603
<i>Troilus and Cressida</i> .	1603	1609*	Marlowe, "Faustus" printed; (acted 1588) . 1604
<i>Measure for Measure</i>	1604	1623	Bacon, "Advancement of Learning" . . . 1605
<i>Othello</i> . . . . .	"	1622*	Bacon married . . . 1606
<i>King Lear</i> . . . . .	1605	1608*	Jonson, "Volpone" . . . 1607
<i>Timon of Athens</i> . .	1606	1623	Chapman, "Bussy d'Ambois" . . . . . "
<i>Macbeth</i> . . . . .	"	"	"A Yorkshire Tragedy" . 1608
<i>Pericles</i> . . . . .	1607	1609*	Fletcher, "Faithfull Shepherdesse" . . . 1609
<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	1608	1623	Jonson's "Alchemist" . 1610
<i>Coriolanus</i> . . . . .	1609	"	Shakespeare retires to Stratford . . . . . 1611
<i>Cymbeline</i> . . . . .	"	"	Webster, "White Devil" (printed) . . . . . 1612
<i>The Winter's Tale</i> .	1610	"	Death of Shakespeare . 1616
<i>The Tempest</i> . . . .	1611	"	
<i>Henry VIII.</i> . . . .	1612	"	

With the exception of "Pericles," all the plays in the foregoing table were printed in the Folio edition of 1623.<sup>1</sup> This venerable volume has the following title-page: "Mr. William | Shakespeares | Comedies | Histories, & | Tragedies | Published according to the True Originall Copies. | (Portrait; Martin Droeshout, sculpsit; Lon-

<sup>1</sup> On 8th November, 1623, Edward Blount and Isaac (son of William) Jaggard obtained license to print "Mr. William<sup>es</sup> Shakespeere's Comedyes, Histories, and Tragedyes, soe many of the said copies as are not formerly entered to other men." But of the twenty plays thus included in their volume they specify only sixteen, the four omitted being "King John," "I. and II. Henry VI" and "The Taming of the Shrew." Apparently they identified these four with plays of similar title but not by Shakespeare, which had already been published and entered on the registers of the Stationers' Company. The sixteen plays licensed are those given in the table as being first printed in 1623 (excluding the four above mentioned).

don) London. | Printed by Isaac Jaggard, and Ed. Blount, 1623 | ."

The thirty-six plays that follow are arranged, chiefly for convenience in printing, under the heads of Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies. The colophon reads: "Printed at the Charges of W. Jaggard, Ed. Blount, I. Smithweeke, and W. Apsley, 1623."

But I need not further describe a volume which is easily accessible in the form of a reprint (see Chapter IX.); I will merely call the student's attention to the varying and sometimes instructive titles of the plays as they appear in the text or in the "Catalogue," from which latter "*Troilus and Cressida*" was omitted. I have stated already that the editors did not include "*Pericles*," which is the first of the plays added in the volume of 1664; and I may add that the book is somewhat carelessly edited and printed, and by no means makes good the claim of its Preface, signed by Heminge and Condell, to have "cured" the "surreptitious copies," and to have printed "all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them." On the contrary, the editors sometimes use a shortened acting version, and sometimes a "surreptitious copy"; indeed, a previous quarto text is now and then the most reliable; and we may doubt whether in any one instance the editors have given us a play as Shakespeare wrote it. The prompt copies would be supplied by John Heminge and Henry Condell, fellow-actors of Shakespeare, and legatees in his will.

The volume, consisting of nearly a thousand pages, was sold at £1 a copy, and the edition numbered about two hundred and fifty copies, of which about one hundred and forty are extant.

The Second Folio, 1632, is merely a reprint of the First, with a few minor alterations that are mostly unnecessary. The Perkins Folio, with Collier's forged emendations, was a copy of this edition.

The Third Folio, of 1663 and 1664, is a reprint of the 1632 volume; it added seven plays, which, with the exception of the first are almost entirely spurious; these are: "Pericles, Prince of Tyre," "The London Prodigall," "The History of Thomas Ld. Cromwell," "Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham," "The Puritan Widow," "A Yorkshire Tragedy," "The Tragedy of Locrine." Particulars of these plays will be found in Chapter VI, section 42.

The Fourth Folio, of 1685, is a reprint of the Third, with some of the spelling modernized.

The quarto editions of single plays now claim our attention. Sometimes they may have been printed from an acting version, but they were mostly "piratical," being copies surreptitiously obtained by unscrupulous publishers. The manner of their production was probably as follows: the publisher would send a shorthand writer to take down what he could of the play; this, written out, would be corrected at another performance, and then hastily printed. We may wonder that the errors and omissions of these Quartos are not more abundant, and that such a Quarto as that of "Henry V" (see Chapter VI, sect. 23) should be published at all is a proof of Shakespeare's popularity.

In the table on pages 54, 55, when the date of the printing of a play is not 1623, the year given is that of the publication of the First Quarto, and an asterisk indicates that it was printed with Shakespeare's name.<sup>1</sup> Particulars of these and other Quartos will be found in Chapter VI.

It will be seen that the dates given in the table are only approximate; at least it is quite the exception if we have chronological evidence that warrants us in giving the year of production with absolute certainty, and though an approximate date is of great value to the student, it follows that all attempts to review the works chronologically as unfolding the growth of the poet's mind, indicating his literary

<sup>1</sup> In "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece" his name follows the Dedication.

path, explaining his choice of subject, the relation of his plots, and the rest, must be made with some reservation.

Nevertheless we get glimpses of the workshop now and then, such perhaps as the following. I have said elsewhere that the training the young poet received as one of a company of actors gave him an advantage over the university playwrights,<sup>1</sup> and may partly account for his rapid advance in every department of his craft as dramatist. He wrote, as we may say, in the theatre, with his eye on the stage; he would give his opinion on the assigning of parts to actors, on points of declamation, gesture, acting, the reading of texts, and so forth—indeed, from the first he would be exercising his critical faculty in everything appertaining to the drama; nor would his pen be idle; its unrivalled dramatic powers could not fail to be discovered, and at the outset—and, as it appears, till the end—its best efforts were claimed by the theatre; and we may well believe that it would find scant leisure for pamphlet or poem. Yet, if we may judge from the universality and the intensity of Shakespeare's genius, as also from the "Sonnets," it was exercised now and then in the production of "occasional" pieces, especially while the poet was yet young; the songs, for example, were not always written to the order of a drama. Still, his work at first would be mainly that of re-touching, re-adjusting, or re-casting plays already to hand, while by degrees he would venture on a more ambitious enterprise, such as "Love's Labour's Lost," "The Comedy of Errors," "Richard III," or "Richard II," and these early experiments would naturally be more or less imitative; Lyly,<sup>2</sup> for example, is the leading spirit of "Love's Labour's Lost," Plautus of "The Comedy of Errors," Marlowe—and we may add Seneca—

<sup>1</sup> See the remarks of Greene, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> A distinction must sometimes be drawn between the euphuism at which Shakspeare laughs, and the euphuism for which he might almost be laughed at. For such affectations in language, see Chapter VI, sect. 6.

of "Richard III," while in "Richard II" both Marlowe and Greene claim Shakespeare as a disciple.

But very near to these in date stands a masterpiece that owns no master—"A Midsummer Night's Dream"; the genius of Shakespeare could not long remain in bondage; and we will now rapidly follow its freer course through some twenty years of authorship. A glance at the table will show us at least one landmark in this long journey; it is the dividing year of the centuries, the year 1600; speaking roughly, the plays that precede this date are light or gay, while those that follow are grave or weighty with thought. We have here no freak of chance, but merely an operation of the laws that govern human life. "From sin thro' sorrow unto Thee we pass"; I quote this in no trifling humour; according to Tennyson it is the spiritual history of all great men, and we have two-thirds of the truth in the words of Shakespeare himself—"He has gained his experience, and his experience has made him sad."

But what we may further learn of the growth of Shakespeare's mind and art from our chronological survey in the next chapter will be found at the opening of Chapter VIII. However, before beginning this survey I wish to make the important remark that the dramas we shall pass in review, be they histories or comedies or tragedies, belong to the man as much as to the theatre; and I must further point out that the great tragedies from "Hamlet," to "Coriolanus" are followed by three plays of yet loftier import, "Cymbeline," "The Winter's Tale," and "The Tempest"; these tender and beautiful pieces are surely the work of one who writes with "calm of mind, all passion spent"; and assuredly they preach to us from that deathless text, "There's nothing we can call our own but love"; Shakespeare was an actor, he was a theatre manager, he was a playwright, but he was also a poet.

As to the relation of the plays in respect of subject,

workmanship, plot, character, and the like, something will be said in the following chapter, and something will be added in the eighth chapter already referred to. But this grouping of plays must not be carried too far, and I shall throughout make it secondary to the chronological, that is, the biographical treatment; it will be my purpose to keep pace with the author, or at least to keep him well in sight as he passes along the clearly defined, the interesting, and the instructive road of his dramatic development.

Another point; at the outset of our investigations in the next chapter we shall be confronted with some problems of divided authorship, and I will make the preliminary admission that Shakespeare's literary world was a narrower one than ours,<sup>1</sup> and that authors, and most of all playwrights, were more easily bound together by the bonds of fellowship, or even jealousy or hate, than they are now; and further, and not altogether distinct from the foregoing, that the productions of an author, especially if he wrote for the stage, were not so strictly his own property as they would be in our day. But after making due allowance for friendship or rivalry among Elizabethan writers, and a certain community of dramatic property or at least an old-time license of literary appropriation, I am less inclined than most critics to admit alien authorship in the dramas of Shakespeare, and more disposed to accept the canon of the folio volume of 1623.

Too much I am sure has been made of the possible contributions of Marlowe and the rest to this or that drama of Shakespeare, and too little by far of the import-

<sup>1</sup> In one sense, however, it was wider. I have already called attention to the fact that a considerable amount of Elizabethan and Jacobean literary work, especially dramatic, has been lost; and this, or much of it, complete or incomplete, known or anonymous, in manuscript or published, would be accessible to Shakespeare; and no doubt, if re-discovered by us, it would disclose some additional sources of his work and explain many problems of his authorship.

ant fact of freedom of literary appropriation, which I have just mentioned; in the very last of his plays Shakespeare did not hesitate to incorporate passages from Montaigne and Ovid—to say nothing of the Italian play he was remodelling—and to incorporate with so little modification that he even reproduced obvious errors. If this is true of “*The Tempest*,” what might we not say of “*Titus Andronicus*”? may we not assume that the weaker passages were incorporated with little modification from some previous writer? Now this, I must point out, is quite a different affair from joint authorship, or from rehandling or retouching the work of another; and this, I must repeat, is the explanation of what often seems due to the latter two causes. Again, we must add the extraordinary inequality discoverable in all Shakespeare’s purely original work, some of which may be accounted for as above; also the fact that as a beginner he had his freaks of style, foibles of taste, and faults of deference to convention or convenience or popular opinion. But on this subject of doubtful or divided authorship I speak here and elsewhere with the strictest reservation; yet while, on the one hand, I shall be unwilling to disown Shakespeare too readily because of this or that short passage, so, on the other hand, I shall be slow to identify him by single lines, or mere groups of lines, or to praise him for such. Some critics set a doubtful example in this regard; we must at least be distrustful of single lines or mere detached passages. Akin to this should be our distrust of the metrical tests that have now their rather dangerous vogue; they are useful only within due limits, but of these I shall speak in Chapter VIII, and some statistics will be found at the end of this volume.

I shall close with another reference to the arrangement adopted in the next chapter; to secure an advantage of perspective I shall make a slight deviation from the chronological order by placing the Poems first; for these



writings, as will be seen, contain some of Shakespeare's earlier efforts, and they form the best introduction to a review of his works generally. Next to the poems come plays representing Comedy, History, and Tragedy; though perhaps not entirely by Shakespeare, nor arranged in exact order of date, they may be regarded as examples of his earlier attempts in these three departments of drama.

## CHAPTER VI

### INTRODUCTIONS TO THE WORKS

#### (I) THE POEMS; PRELIMINARY

**I**N the Elizabethan literature, or at least the earlier part of it, we find the name of only one great poet who was not also a dramatist—the name of Spenser; and it might be added that much of his poetry was written before the true dramatic period began. The Age of Elizabeth was the age of drama; drama was the most important work of all the other great poetic names—of Marlowe, for instance, and Ben Jonson, and of course Shakespeare.

On the other hand, most of the dramatists wrote verse, lyric or narrative; and, again, Shakespeare is no exception; indeed, his non-dramatic poetry is of greater extent and importance than we generally suppose; it extends to nearly 6,000 lines, that is, to more than the half of Virgil's "Æneid" or Milton's "Paradise Lost," or than the whole of the poems of Gray and Goldsmith; and as to its quality, we are assured by more than one critic that it must be regarded as the high-water mark of English poetry. And although, as we may possibly discover, such an estimate should not remain unchallenged, it is evident that Shakespeare's undramatic writings are entitled to a place of some importance in this chapter;<sup>1</sup> indeed, I have

<sup>1</sup> Further, they would occupy our attention on the ground of their personal interest; in these lyrical utterances we might expect to hear more of the man Shakespeare than in the plays; how much it will be one purpose of these sections to discover.

thought it best to begin with these poems, which serve admirably as an introduction to the dramas that follow.

The following is a list of the poems arranged approximately in chronological order:

I. "Venus and Adonis," published 1593 (201 six-line stanzas).

II. "Lucrece," published 1594 (265 seven-line stanzas).

III. "Sonnets" (154 in number), written for the most part about 1594-8, but first published in 1609.

IV. "A Lover's Complaint," in the same volume with the "Sonnets" (forty-seven seven-line stanzas).

V. "The Passionate Pilgrim," published 1599 (twenty short poems, the latter six being headed "Sonnets to Sundry Notes of Music").

VI. "The Phoenix and the Turtle," published 1601 (eighteen short stanzas).

Of these six publications the three last are Shakespeare's only in part, or have been doubtfully assigned to him.

To these may be added the Songs—or most of them—that are scattered about the plays; and one or two poems noticed in Section 5 of this Chapter.

Before giving a detailed account of the foregoing publications, I will make a few general remarks which may help us to understand the conditions that determine their just appreciation, and may also explain certain points in the production of the Elizabethan drama.

We have learnt from the Introductory Chapter to this Handbook that any attempt to appreciate a work of literary art should begin with an examination of the circumstances under which it was produced, and a careful regard for the hints that the writer himself has supplied; this is especially true in the case of Shakespeare's poems, as may be proved by the conflicting criticism they have aroused; and, as I have pointed out, we expect to find more of Shakespeare himself in these compositions than in the presumably impersonal dramas.

For example, we may quote a significant line from the 76th Sonnet,

So all my best is dressing old words new.

Certainly this statement has a local meaning that will be noticed later; but we will take it here in a more general sense as we reflect that Shakespeare seldom originates (though of course I refer chiefly to the "fable," which often calls for ingenuity rather than genius), but prefers to adopt—or, more strictly, to adapt; and these poems are no exception to his rule; in one and the same poet, Spenser, for example, we find the stanzas of the "Venus" and the "Lucrece," and "Sonnets" near akin to Shakespeare's in form, and not altogether distinct in matter or in manner, except for their fuller—not their full—note of sincerity. But to cite Spenser as the original of Shakespeare's non-dramatic writings, or even as the founder of Elizabethan poetry, is superfluous; Spenser is verily and indeed the poet's poet; we do not forget Chaucer, nor did Shakespeare, especially when writing his "Venus" and "Lucrece"; Chaucer's poetic achievement was magnificent, but solitary; compared with Spenser's, it was without influence; it formed no literature; but in Spenser we find the melody, the word, and often the phrase, the imagination and the charm of all the poetry of all the ages that were to be made wealthy with his mere memory; Chaucer was as a meteor flashing across a silent heaven; Spenser was a fixed star in a firmament of song—

Hither as to their fountain other stars  
Repair, and in their urns draw golden light.

But setting Chaucer and Spenser aside, other poets are to be found who served almost certainly for Shakespeare to work upon, and they will be referred to when we consider his poems individually; meanwhile, it may be stated, that these are to some extent copy-work and conventional, the "Venus" and "Lucrece" being foremost among con-

temporary imitations of the tragico-voluptuous writers of the French and Italian Renaissance, while the Sonnets are conspicuous among the crowd of similar compositions (originally Italian and French) that were the significant vogue of the last few years of the sixteenth century.

Next to this suggestion of Shakespeare's indebtedness to other poets, we may find in the "Sonnets" some passages that throw light on an obscure but important characteristic of Elizabethan literature, I mean its low estimate of literary art;<sup>1</sup> and, bound up with this, its occasional want of fervour and sincerity. But I shall keep carefully in view the more general tendencies, and in each instance my quotation will be chosen because I bear in mind many passages of like import that are to be met with elsewhere in Shakespeare. In Sonnet LXXXIII we have the following line—

The barren tender of a poet's debt;

and again, in Sonnet XXXVIII

Those old nine which rhymers invoke.

To these I may add the well-known Sonnets CX and CXI, in which, as we may fairly assume, the poet speaks with some bitterness of his own profession as dramatist. (Cf. p. 51, footnote 1.)

In those days—quite apart from the religious objections of the Puritan—acting and the drama were often regarded with distrust, if not actually condemned; and even the writing of verse was spoken of as a species of trifling. Bacon himself, whose exposition of poetry is acute, and, for such a writer in such an age, not without some degree of elevation, insists too much on its "feigning" qualities and tendencies;<sup>2</sup> this Shakespeare does also; if we ask him, What is the fundamental element in verse? he replies, "feigning": "The truest poetry is the most feigning."

<sup>1</sup> Such as that of Montaigne.

<sup>2</sup> See Chap. IV, pp. 31-45.

For as we have seen already in Chapter IV, he links "feigning love" with "feigning verse"; he groups together "the lunatic, the lover, and the poet." Neither writer had recognized the whole truth<sup>1</sup> that is consummated in this most marvellous of the arts; and Bacon actually concludes his analysis with the significant words, "But it is not good to stay too long in the theatre. Let us now pass on to the judicial place or palace of the mind;" by which he meant the intellectual as opposed to the imaginative faculties. To such imperfect estimates of poetry, which were common enough in the days of Bacon, may be attributed its occasional note of insincerity, the note we hear so often in the sonnets of this period;<sup>2</sup> and not in the sonnets alone; what I miss in the early poems<sup>3</sup> of Shakespeare is the spiritual enthusiasm which I find in Virgil, Spenser, Milton, Dante; his "Venus" and his "Sonnets" have only the artistic enthusiasm, so far as this can be without the other, and it is marvellous that with such a faint or frightened belief (partly classical) in their art, the Elizabethan artists in verse attain such heights; but I will leave the subject in the form of a paradox; perhaps their very aloofness from their creations made them in a lower sense more distinctly creative.

In any case we are bound to receive with hesitation the current opinion which assures us that these three poems, or sets of poems, "throb with passion." Certainly it is Shakespeare himself who formulates the doctrine:

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Spenser and Sidney saw more of it. See also Ch. IV.

<sup>2</sup> If Elizabethan poets do not foam they often speak riddles; and one might almost say that the language of the sonnet was given them to conceal their thoughts; to assure ourselves of this, we need only glance at the list of sonnets and sonneteers on page 82, and deduct the genuine passion from the assumed. See also note 2 at foot of p. 85. So also Jonson wrote of "False baits of worded balladry. . . . They die with their conceits."

<sup>3</sup> I speak not of such dramas as "The Winter's Tale," "Cymbeline," "The Tempest," and these rank worthily with the work of Spenser, Virgil, Milton, Dante. See Ch. VIII.)

Never durst poet touch a pen to write.  
 Until his ink were temper'd with love's sighs ;

and we may suppose that his six thousand lines of early, if not youthful verse will embody that doctrine; but I fail to recognize one stanza—I might almost say one line—that convinces me of genuine passion, unless I detach it altogether from its context of affectation or convention. But even thus it may suffer by comparison, and my meaning will be clearer if I place side by side with the very best of Shakespeare's sonnets, a random passage from some other poet. I will choose the famous seventy-third Sonnet, beginning

*That time of year thou mayst in me behold,*

*and ask my readers to compare it with the last sonnet-stanza of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind":*

*Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is.*

Now, as it happens, Shelley in some degree, like Shakespeare, is dressing up the puppet "obrepit senectus"—the creeping-on of age—in all the gaudy attire of convention; and a certain creative enthusiasm is manifest in both writers; but as to the genuine passion revealed by either poet, I am quite content to let my readers decide.

These reflections lead on to another important point: Shakespeare had made a living by "public means" (Sonnet CXI), that is, he had become—for such is the usual explanation—dramatist and actor; and we have learnt in his life (p. 19) that this was the fact. The bent of his genius was towards the drama; this may account, partly, for the "objectivity" of his enthusiasm and his emotion, and if I were asked for a *leading* characteristic of the poems—and the Sonnets also—I should point to their unrelated, their objective beauty.

Akin to the subject of poetic distrust or depreciation which has brought us to this point, is the reluctance to pub-

lish that we meet with in the Elizabethan poets. Of course this was sometimes due to poverty, but if poetry was a private relaxation rather than a divine art, or if it was even a matter of some reprehension, while the drama was that and something worse, we might expect to find among poets an indifference towards their creations, and a reluctance to make them public. "'Tis ridiculous for a Lord to print verses, 'tis well enough to make them to please himself, but to make them public is foolish;" so Selden wrote, towards the middle of the seventeenth century (published 1689); but earlier, in 1589, the "*Art of English Poesie*" informs us of "very many noble gentlemen of the Court *that have written [poetry] commendably and suppressed it again, or else suffered it to be published without their own names to it.*" Of all this Shakespeare's "*Sonnets*" will serve as an example; written for the most part in 1593-1598, they remained in manuscript for many years, and their publication in 1609 was independent of the author. Indeed, a manuscript in those days seems to have become the property of its possessor, irrespective of the author, and as such was often published; piratical publication is a feature of the times, and Shakespeare's plays, which he had sold in most instances to the theatre proprietors, were published surreptitiously if published at all.

With the aid of Shakespeare himself we have now established some preliminary facts relating to his works which have also a bearing on the literature of his time. I will here add one or two considerations arising out of the poems, which reveal some special characteristic of the poet.

In "*A Lover's Complaint*," which is probably the work of Shakespeare, we come upon the expression, "*deep-brain'd sonnets*"; the epithet is full of significance; the writer's verse will not be passionate nor spontaneous, nor merely musical, nor even youthful; it will come from the



head, not from the heart; feeling will be restrained by reason, poetic impulse by philosophy. And in truth, the poems and dramas of Shakespeare, as well as his sonnets, are at times too deep-brained, and the attempt to cram them with thought leaves them heavy, or it may be unpleasantly ingenious, rather than thoughtful. I say this apart from the Elizabethan habits of word-play which are most marked in the sonnet department of its literature, and Shakespeare's sonnets are no exception to the practice. Further, Shakespeare's early poems are often grouped together as the productions of youth.<sup>1</sup> Again we must reconsider the general verdict. It is based, no doubt, on the following statement in the Dedication of the "*Venus and Adonis*": "If the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, and never after ear [*i.e.*, till] so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest." Taken as a whole, this means, "you are a noble patron, and my verse must live or die at your will;" so we interpret with the aid of the great mass of dedicatory poems of the time. But we lose nothing by taking the phrase literally, seeing that we render "first heir of my invention" by "the first considerable *poem* I have penned—or published."<sup>2</sup> For the drama—which was seldom dedicated to a patron—was distinct enough from "invention"; distinct enough to be omitted from the analysis of poetry in Bacon's "Advancement of Learning," though it found a place in his "De Augmentis." "Invention," moreover, excludes prose; in fact it is a frequent synonym of the time for poetry; we have it in the "Sonnets," for example, in the sense of poetic imaginings, "keep invention in a noted weed." (See p. 84.)

Now, if "*Venus and Adonis*" is a first work, it discovers little of the beginner, and still less of mere youth. Of

<sup>1</sup> "There can be little doubt that they had remained in manuscript many years."—Coleridge "Production of a very young man."—Knight.

<sup>2</sup> Probably the latter.

course we reject the frequent assertions of advancing age<sup>1</sup> that are made by the author of the "Sonnets," as, for instance, in the one (LXXIII) referred to on page 68, where the tendency to bewail "decay" and "the surly sullen bell" (Sonnet LXXI) is much more pronounced than in the kindred stanza of Shelley. Nevertheless Shakespeare was thirty years of age in 1594 (his years but young, but his experience old, as we may be sure), and a man of thirty then was as old as a man of forty now; Southampton was at Cambridge when twelve, and when thirteen sent a Latin essay to Lord Burghley; Bacon was at Trinity when thirteen, and a critic of Aristotle—so says tradition—when fifteen; he was at Gray's Inn, or at Paris learning diplomacy, when sixteen; he was a barrister when twenty-two, and a member of Parliament when twenty-four. Moreover, according to our reckoning, a man of forty has only reached his prime; but those might be the very years claimed by the "aged" author of the "Sonnets," for in the second of these poems he uses "forty winters" as a picturesque phrase for old age.

Apart from all this, it is incredible or impossible that Shakespeare should not have served some poetical or dramatic or prose apprenticeship long before he produced his "Venus and Adonis" in its present highly-finished form. As we have noticed already (page 27), nothing in Shakespeare bears the impress of youth; his immaturity is not known by the usual marks, whether of vocabulary or even of thought; there is little that tells us of the impulse or license of youth as contrasted with the judgement and restraint of riper years; judgement and restraint and an advanced philosophy, profound knowledge of human nature, and a wonderful faculty of drawing character are present from the outset. In fact, we have an example not easily paralleled in literature, of a mature

<sup>1</sup> Valid, however, at least in some degree, as a poetical contrast to the "youth" of the Sonnets.

mind taking up poetry, we may suppose as a business or as a relaxation, never with unsuppressed enthusiasm, never with impulse, never with the blind ardour of ambition. No artist was ever so deliberate.

This may partly explain his dramatic turn and choice, and his unapproached dramatic power; as Coleridge says so admirably, "Shakespeare becomes all things while for ever remaining himself," to which I will add, he becomes all things, but he was never (as we know him) young, nor a beginner; he was an artist from the first.

And now again, with the help of the poet, we have established some preliminary facts which are necessary to a right understanding of his poems; they are "deep-brained;" literary if also original; a fashion if also an impulse; they are "feigned," a pastime, a matter of pleasant rivalry; they throb, not with passion, but with beauty. We now proceed to examine them *seriatim*.

## (2) VENUS AND ADONIS. 1592

### *Historical Particulars*

This poem was entered at Stationers' Hall, 18th April, 1593, by the printer, Richard Field, a fellow-townsmen of Shakespeare, and it was published a month or two later. On the title-page is the Latin couplet:

Vilia miretur vulgus ; mihi flavus Apollo  
Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua.

Following the title-page, which is without Shakespeare's name, comes the famous Dedication, to which his name is appended in full:

"To the Right Honourable | Henrie Wriothesley, Earle of Southampton | & Baron of Titchfield |

"Right Honourable, I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your Lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burthen: only if your honour seem

but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, & never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish, and the world's hopeful expectation

"Your Honors in all dutie

"William Shakespeare."

Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, was a notable patron of Elizabethan letters; he was young, handsome, and accomplished; he has a claim to be the friend, "fair kind, and true" (Sonnet CV), to whom the "Sonnets"—some of them—are addressed (see p. 91).

"Venus and Adonis" is written in the *sesta rima*—a quatrain followed by a couplet; this metre (which we meet with now and then in the plays) was used by Spenser in "Astrophel," but Shakespeare probably derived it from the "Scillaes Metamorphosis" of Thomas Lodge (1589), a poem which almost certainly gave him his subject and suggestions for its treatment. But he had also read the Ovidian story ("Metamorphoses," X), which supplied him with something of manner as well as matter. For his debt to Chaucer and Spenser, see p. 65.

### *Critical Remarks*

Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" and his "Lucrece" are companion poems—pendants; both are objective studies of classic origin, already re-handled; they are addressed to the same person, the second poem, as we learn from the Dedication of the first, being "some graver labour." They remind us a little of Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," or Spenser's "Four Hymns"; they are

stories, or studies, the one of absolutely unrestrained passion heightened by transference to a woman, the other of stern and heroic chastity heightened by association with wedlock. And in securing his effect of contrast the poet is perhaps over-anxious, for the style of his "graver labour," the "Lucrece," is almost too grave; imagery is more rare, the verse is sombre and slow, the stanza, though a better one, is full to heaviness, the whole poem longer and prolix; and the action is delayed, if not interrupted, by Chaucerian digression and dialogue and soliloquy.

Hazlitt pronounced the poems to be "as hard, as glittering, and as cold as a couple of ice-houses"; but, according to M. Taine, the "Venus" is a cry in which the whole man is displayed—"Never was seen a heart so quivering to the touch of beauty." (See also p. 67.)

The conflicts of opinion that are common to all criticism rage their fiercest around the work of Shakespeare; contrasts such as the above will meet us at every stage of our journey; when we come to the "Sonnets," for example, we shall have to learn that no less an authority than Hallam wished they had never been written, whereas another critic describes them as "the noblest poetry of the sonnet and of the world." But these extraordinary contrasts of literary judgement should not discourage the student; possibly they open a middle course along which he may proceed with some degree of security; nevertheless, no ready to hand method should be allowed to supplant, though it may supplement, those legitimate judgements that are based not on the evidence of witnesses, but on a calm investigation of the facts already to hand.

Therefore in every instance we should conduct a strict investigation on our own part; and with reference to the "Venus and Adonis," we again examine the first-hand facts. Let us begin with suggestions thrown out by the writer. In the "Dedication" he deprecates his "unpolished lines"; and in the similar Dedication of

"Lucrece" they are spoken of as "untutored lines," where "untutored" repeats "unpolished" (but may further connote some claim to originality). These phrases, however, are conventional; we shall find them to an extraordinary excess in the Sonnets where the poet protests his "rude ignorance," and asks indulgence for his "pupil pen," his "poor rude lines," his "slight muse," and so forth. This puts us on our guard; we carefully examine the workmanship of the "Venus" and the "Lucrece"; it is more highly finished than that of the early plays; it is elaborate to the verge of stiffness. This may be due partly to the poet's own supervision up to the time of publication, an advantage shared by none of the dramas. Further, the poems contain very few weak lines, far fewer than the Sonnets—or, again, than the early plays; as we have seen (p. 71) there is no evidence of "rude ignorance," and little enough of the mere beginner.

Youth, inexperience, immaturity, passion, are not, as I venture to think, the main features of Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis"; to me it reads like the work of a scholar—or at least a student—rather than the passionate outpouring of a young poet whose emotion, being neither weighty with knowledge nor repressed by experience, comes swift and straight from his heart to ours. It is essentially the work of one who thinks at least as much as he feels; of a great observer; of one who already looks quite through the deeds of men; like the "Lucrece," it has strikingly reflective properties. Yet it bears witness also to a love of beauty, to a faculty of poetic phrase and image, and an absolutely precocious ear for poetic melody.

Nor can I accept without reserve the generally received opinion that the poem gives evidence of an intense love of nature, led perhaps by that old tradition, "native wood-notes wild" (Chap. IV, p. 46). Coleridge went so far as to assert that the "Venus" "must have been pro-

duced in the country, amid country scenes, sights, and employments." This at least is going too far; I have called "*Venus and Adonis*" a student's poem; I am sure it contains more of the library than the meadow, more of the literary<sup>1</sup> world, of classical and mediæval superstition and tradition than of the natural world; more of the pseudo-scientific which often stultifies the latter; we all know the famous description of the horse is from *Du Bartas*; and I suspect that the long and realistic account of the hunted hare is derived, at least in part, from some authority. The term "*musits*" (used again in "*The Two Noble Kinsmen*") makes this possible if not probable; and in any case the minute description is rather that of a huntsman who has ridden with the hounds. It may be noted, moreover, that the hare would never seek cover—a rabbit-hole for instance—"and sometimes where earth-delving conies keep"<sup>2</sup> ("*Venus*," 115), but after running for miles would return to the seat from which she was put up.

A good example of the literary element in this natural description is supplied by "Even as poor birds, deceived with painted grapes," etc. (line 601), which is suggested by the picture of *Zeuxis* mentioned by *Pliny*, whom *Shakespeare* read no doubt in the original as well as in translation. Of the pseudo-scientific, the recognition of similarities and the like, which abounds in the poem, I will select "Like many clouds consulting for foul weather"; and as these remarks apply equally to "*Lucrece*" and the "*Sonnets*," I will quote from the former, "For marks descried in man's nativity, Are nature's faults," and from the *Sonnets* the famous line, "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds" (see p. 88). Also, as I noticed in Chapter IV, the imagery which is most striking in *Shakespeare* comes

<sup>1</sup> For example, the canker and the rose figure occurs about six times in the poems (in the plays it is still more abundant).

<sup>2</sup> *Shakespeare* does not expressly state that the hare took refuge in a rabbit-burrow.

from the artificial as opposed to the natural world; for example, the legal comparisons and figures that abound in these three poems.

On the other hand, let me repeat that although direct observation of the natural world belongs rather to the minute inspection of an age of science—what Bacon has called “earnestness of research”—which gave Tennyson an enormous advantage, we find, nevertheless, in Shakespeare a first-hand knowledge of nature and a faculty for its literary presentment that not only place him far above his contemporaries, but also recall Chaucer and anticipate Wordsworth; and although his outlook on nature is literary rather than loving, and his research so vast that we are not always sure of first-hand imagery, yet these three poems again, “Venus,” “Lucrece,” and the “Sonnets,” are made beautiful beyond all their Elizabethan competitors by their transcripts from the natural world. I give one example:

By this, poor Wat, far off upon a hill,  
Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear.

Finally, as to the suggestion of Coleridge that “Venus and Adonis” was written at Stratford before Shakespeare went to London, this is the extremest of conjectures; biographical data, the evidence of the poem, all probability are against it.

As to the merits of the poem as a whole, its general excellence is partly attested by contemporary applause; this it shares with “Lucrece”; both poems became immediately popular, and went through several editions. “Venus” appeared again in quarto in 1594, 1596, 1599, 1600, and twice in 1602; and “Lucrece,” first published in 1594, was reprinted in 1598, 1600 and 1607. Meres gave the poems his high praise (see page 22). Richard Carew (“Excellencie of the English Tongue,” Camden’s “Remaines”), thus couples Shakespeare with Marlowe: “Will



you read . . . Catullus? take Shakespeare, and Marlowe's fragment": in 1598 Richard Barnfield ("Poems in Divers Humours,") wrote the lines quoted in Chapter III (p. 23), and John Weever in 1595 ("Epigrams"), in a sonnet which begins, "Honey-tongued Shakespeare," gives the two poems his special, if coarse, approbation. It is possible that Henry Constable expressed appreciation of Shakespeare's poem in the pretty shepherd's song of "Venus and Adonis," which he contributed to "England's Helicon"; and it is praised by Heywood and others.

To this well-merited commendation of Shakespeare's contemporaries little need be added; and their comparison of his earlier poems (p. 22) with the work of Ovid is sound enough; cf., for instance, the Latin poet's "ut eburnea si quis Signa tegat claro, vel candida lilia, vitro" ("Met.," IV, 354-355) with the "Venus" stanza quoted below. (See also p. 39.) Catullus, however, supplies a contrast rather than a resemblance; no poet was more personal in his passion than Catullus, none more impersonal than Shakespeare. More just is their mention of Christopher Marlowe; but even in "Hero and Leander":

Where Venus in her naked glory strove  
To please the careless and disdainful eyes  
Of proud Adonis that before her lies,  
She wore no gloves; for neither sun nor wind  
Would burn or parch her hands, but, to her mind,  
Or warm or cool them, for they took delight  
To play upon those hands, they were so white.

even in this masterpiece of Marlowe we miss something of all those elements that make the poem of Shakespeare rich by any comparison—the melody, the imagery, the beauty—nature, art, life:

Full gently now she takes him by the hand,  
A lily prisoned in a gaol of snow,  
Or ivory in an alabaster band,  
So white a friend engirts so white a foe:  
This beauteous combat, wilful and unwilling,  
Shew'd like two silver doves that sit a-billing.

Poetry like this (the poem is full of it) lives not alone in literature, but in the heart of man for ever; who has not heard—who will not hear—"Bid me Discourse," or "Lo here the gentle lark"? it was inevitable that music should strive to share the immortality of "Venus and Adonis."

(3) LUCRECE, 1593.

*Historical Particulars*

"Venus and Adonis" was given to the world in 1593, and in the following year, on May 9th, "Lucrece" was entered in the Stationers' Register as "A Booke intituled the Ravysheiment of Lucrece." It was printed by Richard Field, 1594. The title-page has "Lucrece"; the running title is "The Rape of Lucrece"; and thus we find it on later Quartos, and in Painter's "Palace of Pleasure."

Again, we have a dedication signed by Shakespeare:

"To the Right Honourable Henry Wriothesley, Earle of Southampton and Baron of Titchfield. The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end; whereof this pamphlet, without beginning, is but a superfluous moiety. The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duty would show greater; meantime, as it is, it is bound to your Lordship, to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with all happiness.

"Your Lordship's in all duty,

"WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE."

We notice the somewhat more familiar tone of this dedication, which may imply a nearer intimacy between poet and patron. Like that of the "Venus," it is written in the Euphuistic style of balance, antithesis, and general word-play which mark the beginning of much Elizabethan

prose, the style we recognize, for instance, in the speech of Brutus in "Julius Caesar." The words "this pamphlet without beginning" require explanation; the poet—so I interpret—rushes into the midst of things, and therefore supplies an "argument." This argument is not without interest; it is the longest example we possess of Shakespeare's extra-dramatic prose; the style is by no means Euphuistic, but simple and straightforward as befits the occasion; and further, the passage affords clear evidence of independent study of Roman history.

If we take the poet literally, his writing of "Lucrece" followed immediately on the publication of "Venus and Adonis"; for in the dedication of the latter poem, Shakespeare was "to take advantage of all idle hours till I have honoured you with some graver labour." Shall we understand "idle hours" as the time that could be spared from the stage and from playwriting?

As to the sources of the poem, again we may refer (see p. 78) to Ovid (*Fasti* II) as an author who supplied Shakespeare with material, and something more; *e.g.*, "*Parva sub infesto cum jacet agna lupo*"; and Chaucer's "Legend of Good Women" and his "Troilus" must also be mentioned; another authority may be found in "The Complaint of Rosamond," by Samuel Daniel, 1592. This poem, written also in the Lucrece stanza (the seven-lined, or "rhyme-royal"), probably furnished Shakespeare with hints for his treatment of the popular story. Suggestions may also have come from Sidney, Watson, Painter (p. 79), and others.

### *Critical Remarks*

Of Shakespeare's classic theme enough was said in the former section, unless I add that he chose for his two poetic ventures two of the most popular subjects of the time; besides versions or imitations mentioned above, we may note that four sonnets in the "Passionate Pilgrim"

deal with the "Venus and Adonis" story, but only one of these has a touch of Shakespeare's hand; moreover, readers of his plays will remember the many references to the legend of Lucrece; and ladies were accustomed to wear rings engraven with the head of the famous Roman model of chastity.

I have also remarked on the style and treatment of the poem; I consider it far inferior to the "Venus," which has faults, perhaps many of them, but nothing quite like this:

Disturb his hours of rest with restless trances,  
Afflict him in his bed with bed-rid groans;  
Let there bechance him pitiful mischances  
To make him moan, but pity not his moans;  
Stone him with harden'd hearts, harder than stones,  
And let mild women to him lose their mildness,  
Wilder to him than tigers in their wildness.

An exceptional passage of such indubitable trifling might be entitled to a hearing in the witness box, but, strangely enough, this is one stanza among many of the same character in the context.

And, speaking generally, we have less nature, less melody, less beauty, less poetry than in the earlier poem. Yet again, compared with contemporary efforts of the kind, "Lucrece" claims a position of vantage;<sup>1</sup> with the poem of Daniel, for instance, it contrasts strikingly and happily; Shakespeare never wrote a hundred consecutive lines without showing us something that only the gods could give, and time could never take away. I have just written the word "time"; we turn to "Lucrece"; "Thou ceaseless lackey to eternity"; "O Time, thou tutor both to good and bad"; "Time's glory is to calm contending kings, To unmask falsehood, and bring truth to light."

<sup>1</sup> In 1594 Michael Drayton (*Legend of "Matilda the Fair"*) stated that "Lucrece" was "revived to live another age"; and in 1595 William Clerke ("*Polimanteia*") gave praise to "sweet Shakespeare" for his "Lucrecia"; and in "*Willobie his Avis*," 1594, we read how "Shakespeare paints poor Lucrece's rape."

## (4) THE SONNETS, 1594-1600

(a) *Introductory*

HERE we enter a maze of which no man has yet found the centre; these two thousand lines of verse have called up a library of comment, and with this a perplexing array of theories, on every one of which we must still pass the verdict "not proven."

This, as we have seen, is by no means wholly due to the Sonnets themselves, which primarily are one with their Elizabethan kind, as also to some extent are the poems; but rather to the genius displayed in the vast dramatic work of their author, and to the belief that here, if anywhere, he has unlocked his heart.<sup>1</sup>

But in Chapter IV, where I endeavoured to gain some glimpses of Shakespeare in his work, I made little reference to the Sonnets; and it is possible that as material for biography, the plays are more reliable; Shakespeare's temperament, his training, and above all, his times, forbid us to expect a revelation within the compass of these poems. But this aspect of the problem of the sonnets will be examined later; at present we must only bring forward some preliminary considerations.

Besides the "Amoretti" (1594) of Spenser already mentioned, we have to notice other sonnet or poem sequences of this period, notably the "Hekatompathia" of Watson, 1582; the "Astrophel and Stella" of Sidney, 1591; the "Delia" of Daniel, 1592; the "Parthenophil and Parthenophe" of Barnabe Barnes, 1593, and the "Idea's Mirror" of Drayton, 1595. If I add that between 1592 and 1598 no less than fifteen other collections were published, it will be evident that Shakespeare wrote when the sonnet fever was at its height, for the date of many of his contributions is not far from the year 1596; and

<sup>1</sup> And it is partly due, as we shall see later, to the circumstances of their publication.

possibly if they had then been published, and with his sanction, the collection would have borne some fanciful name—let us say “*Incognita*”; or, as was then the practice, a title imported from France.

Among these sonneteers Sidney and Spenser may take the highest place; and Daniel must be mentioned, for to him Shakespeare may have owed the form of his sonnets (though Surrey used it earlier); also Drayton,<sup>1</sup> whose sonnet “Since there’s no help, come let us kiss and part,” proves that Shakespeare stands not always alone whether in regard to the form or the matter or the manner of this species of poetry.

But again, if we form a brief estimate, as we well may at this point, we award to Shakespeare, among Elizabethan competitors, the sonnet crown; and this not with hesitation, but with “full-handed plaudits.”

Yet the form chosen by Shakespeare—quatrains and a couplet—is not generally approved; of all sonnet structures it is the easiest to build, and on that account, as an edifice of song it is the least imposing; complexity, and not simplicity, make the music and the magic of a sonnet; the mere management of the rhymes of the octave and sestet pattern is a world of trouble to the writer, and a world of wonder and delight to the reader; then there is the rise and fall of emotion through the eight lines and the six, and the countless other beauties<sup>2</sup> involved in its unsymmetrical symmetry, for which, however, there is no space here. I must now point out some defects in the Shakespearean model; for example, the couplet at the close becomes unbearably monotonous<sup>3</sup>—an effect which Spenser avoided in his famous stanza by making the

<sup>1</sup> If it be Drayton's, it is strikingly Shakespearean.

<sup>2</sup> Which like Milton's angels “in narrow room throng numberless”; this, by the way, is the “narrow room” of Wordsworth's sonnet on the sonnet.

<sup>3</sup> Final couplets are a doubtful, if not a fatal device in a long poem or a long series of poems.

second of the two rhyming lines an Alexandrine; and the monotony of this couplet is increased by the fact that it is usually a repetition or summary of the thought of the poem,<sup>1</sup> and if not this, it is epigrammatic, or too palpably an antistrophe or anti-climax. Still, it is needless to say that *Shakespeare's hand struck from this somewhat imperfect instrument sounds that were both rich and new; their echoes indeed will roll through the ages.*

(b) *The Problem of the Sonnets*

In planning his two poems, Shakespeare, as we have seen, was not unwilling to take hints from contemporary poets; but in writing the sonnets he followed still more closely a still more prevailing fashion of his time.<sup>2</sup> Of this, which is the most important clue, we now proceed to avail ourselves more fully; and as on a former occasion, we apply to the poet himself for some first-hand information.<sup>3</sup> And although the Sonnets abound in contradictions and enigmas, we shall find not a little that may guide us.

In Sonnet LXXVI the poet expresses a kind of regret that he must

Write . . . still all one, ever the same,  
And keep invention in a notèd weed;

this means, primarily, "My verse lacks originality; yet I have a quiet style of my own, nothing new fangled about it, and everybody can recognize it"; but the words—as so often in Shakespeare—have a sense beyond the primary, to be thus interpreted, "Partly to feed my humour, partly

<sup>1</sup> The theme of most of these sonnets of Shakespeare may be sought in the two closing lines; indeed, they often supply the place of the commentator.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 82 for the thousands of sonnets that were manufactured during this last decade of the century. Even Bacon writes in 1600: "I had, though I profess not to be a poet, prepared a sonnet directly tending and alluding to draw on her majesty's reconciliation to my Lord."

<sup>3</sup> Why does he write at all? why not produce some great poetic work? To all such questions Shakespeare himself supplies the answer.

to be one with my kind, I must write a long series of sonnets full of false notes, such as are now the exacting vogue." And by way of further motive he continues,

You and love are still my argument.

*This is exactly what we should expect and what we want; for here primarily we have the meaning as follows: "The subjects of these conventional sonnets are three in number, viz., adulation, and its rivalries, friendship and its rivalries"; but remembering what we have said above concerning the second (or third) sense of a word in Shakespeare, we extend the meaning of the word "love" beyond friendship, and add as the third subject, "sexual love and its rivalries."*

These three, moreover, adulation, friendship, love, are the subjects of nearly all sonnets, whether of the time of Shakespeare or any other; but of course—unlike Spenser and Sidney—Shakespeare was married, and, in spite of the poetic and other conditions of those days, unless he addressed his wife, he could scarcely write of love with genuine passion; love, therefore, as he treats it, will be tinged with convention, if not wholly conventional; and the same may be said of his other subjects.<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, are two important facts; the sonnets of Shakespeare are at least to some extent conventional, artificial—a fashion; and in subject and sentiment they are personal or pseudo-personal, possibly effusive, perhaps insincere. But these two facts are closely related and may now be considered together.

The Middle Age habit of feigning ~~an~~ personal verse, especially the erotic, had by no means died out when Shakespeare wrote, though of course it had become greatly modified; the Elizabethan sonnet is partly real,<sup>2</sup> though

<sup>1</sup> In fact, the friendship of the sonnets is half of it classical, the intrigue is more than half romantic, and the personal element that remains is merely enough to lend an artistic verisimilitude.

<sup>2</sup> Those of Spenser or Sidney for example; others like Shakespeare's



in greater part artificial. This tendency to become artificial may be noticed in other forms of poetry, the pastoral for instance; but in the sonnet it appeared almost at the outset, and a form of poetry which served admirably for unlocking the heart ended, as in Shakespeare, by more or less effectually locking it. But we must recall the word "ended;" for as the winter of artifice in pastoral verse was followed by a splendid spring, so reaction set in against the conventional sonnets, and in Milton the thing became a trumpet of no uncertain sound.

With Shakespeare, however, it was otherwise: he was not ignorant of the fact; and just as though a Euphuist (p. 105) he condemned Euphuism, so as a sonnet writer he almost despised sonneteering; he regrets that his "poor rude lines" have not kept pace with "the bettering of the time" (Sonnet XXXII), and that his "Muse" has not "grown with this growing age" (XXXII); and in the plays we find many disparaging references to the practice of sonnet writing. "Assist me," says Armado in "Love's Labour's Lost" (I. ii. 190), "for I am sure I shall turn sonnet"; and in the same play (IV. iii. 158) Biron protests, "Tush, none but minstrels like of sonneting." Similar remarks will be found in "The Two Gentlemen of Verona"; indeed, Shakespeare seldom mentions the sonnet without some accent of contempt.

On the poet's showing, therefore, the sonnets of this period—his own included—are to be read with caution; but similar testimony is found in many other writers, in Thomas Watson, for example, and Sir Philip Sidney.

Even when they poured out a genuine passion, these sonnet makers loaded their language with conceits, and there was perpetual thought shuffling and word trifling;

and Daniel's, are yet more doubtful; Drummond's are more natural; others again, like those of Watson, are altogether artificial. The mediæval sonnet sequences, addressed to a fictitious mistress, extended their influence to sonnets devoted to patrons, friends, and the like.

and they often took pains to disguise their verse or its subject; like a dissolving view, the Rosalind of Spenser's dream-love passes into the "New Pandora" of his "Amoretti," and in this "pleasant mew" he merely "sports his muse"; and Sidney appears to have disarranged his sonnets in order to make them less autobiographical.

And in addition to what was said above on the subject, a reluctance to publish—or at least to print—this personal verse should again be noticed; the sonnets of Watson, Daniel, and Constable passed from hand to hand long before they were printed; the loves of Astrophel and Stella lay hidden in MS. for ten years;<sup>1</sup> indeed the series was not published till after Sidney's death; and lastly, I must here remark on the words of Meres (p. 22) respecting Shakespeare: "his sugred Sonnets *among* his private friends," where, as Meres intended, *among* may be variously taken; it may mean "circulated among" (in MS.), or "addressed to," or "dedicated to," or "on the subject of," or "submitted to for appreciation;" and it may mean—and does probably—something of all these.

To sum up therefore; these sonneteers, and Shakespeare among them, frequently set at naught the famous "Look in thy heart and write" of Sir Philip Sidney; this rather is their motto—"Look in books; look at others; write exercises; or if you happen to write what is in your heart, write it in riddles; use the language of the sonnet to conceal your thoughts."

Indeed, I must now refer to what I have elsewhere called Shakespeare's "habit and practice of ambiguity as we find it in the dramas," where we learn that his dealings with language are often subtle beyond our subtlest interpretation; and there is no reason why he should not have hidden his very heart in sonnets conventional even to a purpose, a purpose that may have lurked deepest in their most

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Newman, who printed them on his own account in 1591, stated in his dedication that they had been "spread abroad in written copies."

borrowed conceits, nay, in the varying notes struck at intervals from the same conceit. This then, as I think, is the problem of the sonnets; some were exercises; some were written in friendly rivalry;<sup>1</sup> some rang changes on themes present to the poet in his other work; some were "occasional" pieces; but many were either adapted or composed so that within their form of artifice they half revealed and half concealed a soul of intense reality. We now proceed with caution in our search among the sonnets themselves, where we may find illustrations of the foregoing, and perhaps some other problems and possible solutions.

(c) *The Sonnets. Historical Particulars*

We have seen that Shakespeare's "sugred sonnets among his private friends" are mentioned by Meres in 1598;<sup>2</sup> but although a few may have been added after this date,<sup>3</sup> they were not published till 1609. The play of "Edward III" (about 1595), contains a line

Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds,

which occurs in Sonnet XCIV; possibly the play came first; but this is still a matter of doubt. One other item of chronological evidence is the fact that Sonnets CXXXVIII and CXLIV were printed in the "Passionate Pilgrim" of 1599; and I may add that the style and the thought of these sonnets places some of them in the period of the earlier dramas, and the two poems, while others have resemblances in plays as late as 1600.

"A book called Shakespeare's Sonnettes" was entered

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "Much Ado about Nothing", V. ii. 4, 5:

*Margaret.* Will you then write me a sonnet in praise of my beauty?

*Bene.* In so high a style, Margaret, that no man living shall come over it.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 22, where it will be noticed that Meres cites Ovid, and puts the two poems of Shakespeare by the side of the sonnets.

<sup>3</sup> Examples of sonnets occur in the plays; there are three in "Love's Labour's Lost," two choruses in "Romeo and Juliet," and a letter in sonnet form in "All's Well that Ends Well."

in the Register of the Stationers' Company of 1609 (May 20th), and the same year was published a Quarto volume with the following title page: "Shakes-speares Sonnets | Neuer before Imprinted | At London | By G. Eld for T.T. and are | to be solde by *William Apsley* | 1609."<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the sonnets was printed "A Lover's Complaint" (see pp. 98 and 99).

The name of the bookseller, John Wright, appears on half of the copies of this edition, which was undoubtedly surreptitious. From the wording of the title, "Shakespeare's Sonnets," we gather that the volume was a tradesman's venture; had the publication been sanctioned by the author, we should have expected "Sonnets by William Shakespeare."

Then comes the famous Dedication, which is hardly that of author to patron; but, as we may suppose, of publisher to some person at present unknown; it reads thus:

To . the . onlie . Begetter . of .  
 These . insving . Sonnets .  
 Mr. W. H. All . happinesse .  
 and . that . eternitie .  
 promised .  
 by .  
 our . ever-living . Poet .  
 wisheth .  
 the . well-wishing .  
 Adventurer . in .  
 setting .  
 forth .  
 T. T.

Although instances occur in Elizabethan literature of a work being dedicated to a patron, not by the author, but by publisher or editor, it might seem that this piratical issue of Shakespeare's "Sonnets" is prefaced by what in our day would be called an advertisement, which may include a compliment to some fellow tradesman. It implies that

<sup>1</sup> The actor, Edward Alleyn, bought a copy for 5*d.* in the month of June in that year.

the Sonnets were well known, and therefore a good publishing adventure; indeed two of the best of them had been pirated by William Jaggard (p. 99); perhaps, also, that they had been long withheld from the press; and if piratical, the adventurer would not dedicate them to a patron. But let us examine the Dedication word by word; we have Mr. W. H., which does not suggest rank or eminence. Next, if "begetter" means inspirer, the word "only" repeats the line

You and love are still my argument; (LXXVI)

but the inspiration was diverse in date, and too various to be due to any one begetter in the ordinary sense of the word. Or if "begetter" means "author," then why "only"? and possibly one or two of the sonnets are thrown in, and not by Shakespeare at all. Finally, does the word "begetter" include "A Lover's Complaint"?

But as long ago as 1817, Drake gave to the word "begetter" in this Dedication the rare meaning of "obtainer"; a meaning so rare that there is nothing like it in Shakespeare, and, as to Elizabethan literature and usage, it is rare enough to be suspicious.<sup>1</sup> But assuming that the word has this bearing, then "only" may mean "only true and genuine," "never before procured," "only thus made available for publication."

The initials T. T. are those of the publisher, Thomas Thorpe (*cf.*, W. P., *i.e.* Ponsonby, appended to the Dedication of Spenser's "Amoretti"); but W. H. has not yet been identified. Of the many guesses at this mysterious personage—if indeed he be a personage—I have space for three only; first, William Hall, a stationer's assistant, who had already contrived to secure the MS. of a poem by Southwell:<sup>2</sup> if so, we might thus paraphrase the Dedica-

<sup>1</sup> "Shall beget you the reversion" ("Satiromastix," 1602). See "Athenaeum," 1900: Feb. 24th, March 10th, March 17th, March 24th.

<sup>2</sup> Which he published with a dedication signed "W. H." See Lee, "Life of Shakespeare," pages 92, 402-403.

tion: "Thomas Thorpe, the well-wishing publisher of this volume, dedicates it to Mr. Wm. Hall, by whom alone the following poems were obtained, and to whom he wishes all happiness and such endless fame as our immortal Shakespeare in his verse foretold for himself."

But all this is within the region of surmise; a patron may be present in this obscure title-page; he may have, as the sonnets seem to tell us, the Christian name of "Will"; and he may yet win the eternal fame that was promised to him in these poems.

Two candidates for this eternity have been proposed; they are, Henry Wriothesly, Earl of Southampton, to whom Shakespeare himself had dedicated his "Venus" and "Lucrece," and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. But I must leave these rivals to advance their claims on their own responsibility, and I merely point to the fact that the initials of one are W. H., and of the other these letters reversed. I might also add that the W. H. of the Dedication has been regarded as a misprint for W. S.

One clue that might guide us a little way in this labyrinth has yet to be noticed; Sonnets LXXVIII-LXXXVI give details—apparently circumstantial—of a rival poet; but even the mention of "his spirit, by spirits taught to write Above a mortal pitch," "his compeers by night Giving him aid," "that affable familiar ghost," gives us no real clue; Chapman's "Shadow of Night" appeared in 1594, with the motto, "Versus mei habebunt aliquantum noctis;" and in the Dedication he tells us that the poet has need of invocation, watching and fasting—"yea, not without having drops of their souls, like a heavenly familiar;" but other poets besides Chapman have at least some pretensions to this dignity of rival with Shakespeare; among them are Jonson, Marston, Drayton, Daniel, and Barnabe Barnes.

Another clue which guides us, I fear, no further than the one above mentioned, is afforded by "Willobie his Avis"

(p. 81). In the midst of its seventy-two cantos an argument in prose informs us of a "familiar friend W. S. who not long before had tried the courtesy of the like passion, and was now newly recovered of the like infection." This may be a reference to the love affair which some would discover in the sonnets mentioned below; the writer who had been laughed at would now secretly laugh at his friend's folly, or would "see whether it would sort to a happier end for this new actor than it did for the old player." But the whole volume appears to be fictitious, and even if W. S. here stands for William Shakespeare, we grasp no solid fact.

Still more elusive than the rival poet is the "dark lady" of the Sonnets, and I am not disposed to record so much as one of the conjectures that seek to explain her mysterious or her fictitious being.

It might be some slight gain to literature, but I could not wish to see the veil removed, whether from the fiction or the personality.

In much the same words we may speak of the story that seems to lurk in sonnets<sup>1</sup> XL-XLII, CXXXIII-CXXXVI, and CXLIII and CXLIV; they may have links with the "Willobie" before mentioned, and yet we may disperse these sonnets, fitting the first three into the first series, as they occur, and the others may read like a conventional exercise which slightly modifies a contemporary theme.<sup>2</sup>

One sonnet, however, No. CVII, might seem to contain a core of reality; the line

The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also with closing scenes of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona."

<sup>2</sup> Not long before Shakespeare had written ("Two Gentlemen of Verona," V. iv. 53, 54):

In love,

Who respects friend?

and not long after, he was writing in "Much Ado about Nothing" (II. i. 182):

Friendship is constant in all other things,  
Save in the office and affairs of love.

may refer to the death of Elizabeth; "Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom" seems to tell of Southampton in the Tower, and "My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes," maybe the poet's celebration of the Earl's release, April 10th, 1603; while "this most balmy time" reads like a welcome to James. All this may be, but I think not; the reference to Southampton would be a late one, and we can scarcely deny the possibility of other interpretations; this, I believe, is the inner thought of the sonnet: "I myself feared that love could not last; and such was the doubting or the sneering forecast of my friends; but neither I nor they knew the abiding power of love; the love which we doomed to death has suffered only a short eclipse, and the dismal augurs have put themselves to shame. What before was doubtful, now is certain; renewal of love is an earnest of love's immortality; and from this passing cloud my love looks forth fresher than before; I too am immortal, for Death has no power over my verse, potent as he may be with lesser spirits who are dumb. And this my verse, O friend, which makes your poet immortal shall be your own everlasting monument." There are yet a few sonnets that may be classed as almost autobiographical; such are CX and CXI; cf. "So am I made the servant of the manie, And laughing stocke," *sqq.* ("Teares of the Muses").

Lastly, we come to the Second Edition of the Sonnets, which was printed in 1639, and published in 1640. This volume, "Poems: written by Wil. Shake-speare, Gent," included many pieces that are not by Shakespeare; and as to the Sonnets, it adds to our confusion, for after omitting six of their number it prints the remainder in a worse order than that of 1609, and in arbitrary groups with fanciful titles; while poems from the "Passionate Pilgrim" are placed between these groups. Surely it is in some spirit of irony that Benson, the seller of the volume, writes in his prefatory address: "(they are) of the same purity the Authour then living avouched," and asserts that the



reader will find them "Serene, clear, and elegantly plain."

(d) *Critical Remarks*

We now see that the criticism of a series of sonnets always a matter of some difficulty,<sup>1</sup> is hampered in the case of Shakespeare by the circumstances of publication. These give rise to a number of preliminary questions, which we can do little more than state: "Are these Sonnets all by Shakespeare?" "Are they all the Sonnets of Shakespeare?" "Are they arranged in this order by the author?"<sup>2</sup> is it the order of composition; or is it any order at all?" "Have we the author's text, or is it, as with most of the plays, corrupt?"<sup>3</sup>

A few words on the order of the Sonnets; it is best to accept that which is prescribed by the volume of 1609; no better has yet been devised, at least no two critics agree in their proposed re-arrangement, and I shall not adventure mine. Of this order, I-CXXVI, which conclude with an "Envoi" of twelve lines, seem addressed to a young man, possibly a patron, who is the "master-mistress" of the poet's devotion; they seem to cover a period of two or three years, and differ greatly in merit and in sentiment; at the outset they echo the music of the earlier plays, but later they are tinged with the dark colours of the tragedies. They may be subdivided into groups, I-XXXII, XXXIII-XLII, XLIII-LXXIV, LXXV-XCVI, XCVII-XCIX, C-CXXVI; and there may be a break at LVIII; but even this is conjecture, and possibly a few of them may be applied equally to a man or a woman. Most of the sonnets

<sup>1</sup> Because a sonnet sequence is usually the most desultory species of poetical composition; we may apply to it what Tennyson said of his "In Memoriam": "Wherever I could find a blank space I would put in a poem." To this we may add that the sonneteer rarely sees the end from the beginning of his series.

<sup>2</sup> For example, CXLV is written in Iambic tetrameters.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, the couplet at the close of XXXVI is identical with that at the close of XCVI.

that follow CXXVI seem addressed to some "dark lady" who is painted in colours not altogether conventional;<sup>1</sup> and some may be addressed to another woman. The two sonnets at the close stand apart. (See page 96.)

I have written an analysis of the sonnets: but again I respect the limitations, and withhold it from print; my readers will generally find guidance in the last two lines of each sonnet (p. 84, foot-note). Otherwise, I may refer them to Professor Dowden's notes, and to those of Wyndham and Beeching; a few general remarks must occupy my remaining space.

With regard to the subject of these poems; in addition to what has preceded, I may revert to the main theme of friendship and love; this is treated more fully in the pages that follow;<sup>2</sup> here I will give one quotation which may throw some light on Shakespeare's opinions: "The love of men to women is a thing common and of course, but the friendship of man to man infinite and immortal";—"Wit's Commonwealth," 1598.

Next I may note in Sonnets I-XVII an expansion of the theme familiar to Shakespeare in Sidney's "Arcadia," which we may trace to Paulus Silentarius.

καλα τα παρθενίης κειμήλια. παρθενίη δέ,  
τὸν βίον ὤλεσεν ἄν, πᾶσι φυλαττομένη  
τοῦνεκεν ἐνέσμιμος ἀλοχὸν λάβε, καὶ τινὰ κόσμῳ  
δὸς βροτὸν αὐτ. σθέν.

[Fair are the treasures of virginity, but virginity, if guarded by all, would destroy life. Therefore take to thee lawfully a mate, and give a mortal to the world in place of thyself. Cf "Rom. and Juliet," I. i. 221-6.]

This theme we have also in "Venus and Adonis;" and it finds a place in "Twelfth Night" (e.g. I, v. 259-261). Changes, moreover, are rung on the "Exegi Monumentum" of Horace, or Ovid's—

<sup>1</sup> She appears in XL-XLII, and CXLIV is a connecting link. Perhaps we may cf. Byron and his Rosaline, and there may be a hint of Cleopatra.

<sup>2</sup> See especially the review of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," Chapter VI, Sect. 13; also Chapter VII.

Jamque opus exegi, quod nec Jovis ira, nec ignis,  
Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustas;

with the latter we may compare Sonnet LV,

Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall burn,

where the poet brings in Mars (instead of Jove) as elsewhere ("Henry V," Prol. 7) he gives us "Mars followed by Famine, Sword, and Fire."<sup>1</sup>

Other conventional topics that seem to occur with many variations are those we associate with a patron and the poet; but for these I have no space. I must, however, mention the two sonnets (CLIII and CLIV) that close the series, but are distinct therefrom; they present two settings of a theme which is found in an epigram of Marianus.

Of allegorical and philosophical interpretations given to these poems I say nothing; such speculations are as profitless as they are endless; I will, however, remind my readers that the Shakespeare of whom we get some glimpses is the Shakespeare only of an earlier period—from "A Midsummer Night's Dream," let us say, to "Hamlet," and not of "The Tempest."

Next, as regards form, finish, and poetical merit generally, these Sonnets of Shakespeare are most unequal; in spite of the years over which they may be spread, their differences are striking enough to be phenomenal; they are more striking than in the "Venus" and "Lucrece"; we have the very best of Shakespeare and the very worst, but rather more of the latter. The faults with which we are so familiar in the early dramas—the conceits, the quibbles, and a hundred others—are here in yet greater abundance, and they are often aggravated by rhyme. On the other hand, we have much that is excellent; still, if I said

<sup>1</sup> It has been supposed, but without any real ground, that Shakespeare was indebted to some Latin by Meres ("Palladis Tamia"): "Nec Jovis, ira, imbres, Mars, ferrum, flamma, senectus," etc.

that we often have Shakespeare at his best in these poems; I was wrong; we must not look for his supreme efforts in rhyming verse; but even his desultory rhymes are here and there of surprising strength and beauty, and I must now commend them in some detail; for though we listen not among these sonnets for the soul-animating strains of Milton, they are fulfilled indeed with a music sweet as love and deep as death; we may find also, and that abundantly, Shakespeare's ever felicitous and pictured phrase, his splendid vision of imagery, that cunningest colour-art of language, a brother to that sister art of melody, begotten like her of inspiration and contemplation, twin-born with her to become the most divine utterance of the human soul.

This praise is by no means excessive, and I will take the opportunity of pointing out that in addition to the above magnificent elements of pure poetry, we have in Shakespeare's plays the yet sweeter, fuller, and grander music of blank verse, the profoundest philosophy of all the ages, and a dramatic power that is at once the astonishment of every reader and the despair of every writer. These plays we shall review later in this chapter; but they contain a lyric element which must next be noticed.

## (5) OTHER POEMS

### (a) *The Songs*

As drama idealizes the whole of life, there come within its scope both the song of festival and the dirge of funeral; and these are well represented in Shakespeare. Somewhat out of place in an epic, as in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," these songs are appropriate to the drama, where they are assigned to a character who sings them; they bring us nearer to the opera, and have some bearing on a passage which will be found on a later page (Chapter VIII), where I anticipate the ideal element that

music may yet add to the drama. Song, aided mostly by rhyme, and with or without the help of music, is perhaps the most perfect utterance of human emotion; love, adoration, joy, grief, the battle and the feast, have expressed themselves in song from the very childhood of our race, and the songs we find in the dramas of Shakespeare are among the best of their kind. They are artless enough to be perfect in their art, and this praise we must often withhold from other song-writers.

Tennyson himself, a composer of some perfect songs, speaks of the difficulties that beset this branch of the poet's art; these difficulties are entirely overcome in many of the wood-notes wild that are heard at intervals in most of Shakespeare's dramas; there, too, we meet with occasional quatrains, sestet, octosyllabic trochaic or iambic, and even sonnets. But I must close this brief notice by referring to a song which most critics deny to Shakespeare; this is the bridal song that opens the first act of "The Two Noble Kinsmen." Certainly it is not quite in Shakespeare's manner, but I grudge any other poet the possession of these four stanzas; they have their faults, yet they are original and sometimes bewitching in their beauty and their melody. This effect is due chiefly to the rhythm of the third and sixth lines—"And sweet thyme true,"<sup>1</sup> which has been reproduced by Keats in his "La Belle Dame sans Merci"—"And no birds sing."

### (b) *A Lover's Complaint*

This poem was printed at the end of the volume containing the Sonnets (1609). Of Shakespeare's music and painting it has little indeed; but of words not elsewhere used by Shakespeare it has an extraordinary proportion—quite one to each stanza. Nevertheless it has some Shakespearean elements, mostly of the unlovelier

<sup>1</sup> For the line, "With hairbells dim" (Skeat's emendation) we might compare the "violets dim" of "The Winter's Tale," IV. iv. 120.

kind. I regard it as an exercise of much earlier date than any other of Shakespeare's extant poetical work; we have nothing elsewhere so utterly crude as :

Which fortified her visage from the sun,  
Whereon the thought might think sometime it saw.

On the other hand, while these crudities and poetical imbecilities are everywhere abundant, passages—if any—that rise above the lowest Shakespearean flight are incredibly scarce; we have plenty of immature and absolutely bad work in the "Venus" and the Sonnets; but we have also plenty of what is good, and not a little of what is excellent.

Let me, however, point out that our interest in "A Lover's Complaint" becomes valid when we remember its extrinsic as apart from its intrinsic value; the merest and poorest fragment of work by Shakespeare deserves our closest attention, and it may be of incalculable literary importance.

(c) *The Passionate Pilgrim*, 1599

This collection of twenty poems was "Printed for W. Jaggard, and are to be sold by W. Leake, at the Greyhound, in Paules Churchyard." To this title-page the name of Shakespeare is appended. The following is a list of the contents :

I. Shakespeare's Sonnet CXXXVIII, perhaps an earlier version.

II. Shakespeare's Sonnet CXLIV, suggested possibly by one in Drayton's "Idea" series. (XXII in Ed. of 1599.)

III. Longaville's Sonnet in "Love's Labour's Lost"; an incorrect version.

IV, VI, and IX, in the order VI, IV, and IX form a sequence which I consider to be the work of Shakespeare; we have his manner, melody, imagery; the "steep-up hill" in IX is the "steep-up heavenly hill" of Sonnet

VII (imitated by Tennyson in "steep-up spout"); and in "Othello" we have "steep-down gulfs." Also we may compare with "The Taming of the Shrew," Induction, 51-55 ("Dost thou . . . wind").

V. Biron's Sonnet in "Love's Labour's Lost," II. ii.; an inferior version.

VI. See IV.

VII. Author unknown.

VIII. From Richard Barnfield's "Poems in divers Humours," 1598.

IX. See IV.

X. Author unknown.

XI. From Bartholomew Griffin's, "Fidessa," 1596 (slightly altered).

XII. Author unknown; "the earliest known version of a popular ditty" (Halliwell-Phillips).

XIII. Author unknown. Compare with X.

XIV. These five stanzas are sometimes erroneously printed as two poems. Author unknown. Here follows a new title-page—"Sonnets to Sundry Notes of Musicke"; it bears the date 1599.

XV. Author unknown.

XVI. From "Love's Labour's Lost," IV. iii., with two lines omitted; printed also in "England's Helicon," 1600.

XVII. Author unknown; also printed in "England's Helicon," and signed "Ignoto." Another version is found in the "Madrigals," etc., of Thomas Weekes, 1597.

XVIII. Author unknown. It is conjectured that these verses are connected with "Willobie his Avis" (see Section 4 of this Chapter, pp. 91 and 92).

XIX. Is an incorrect version of Marlowe's well-known stanzas, which should be six in number; the same number are found in Raleigh's "Reply," the first of which, with a slight difference, is printed here as "Love's Answer." (In "England's Helicon" the "Reply" is signed "Ignoto.")

XX. From Richard Barnfield's "Poems in divers Hu-

mours" (see No. VIII). Lines 1-26, with two lines added are signed "Ignoto" in "England's Helicon." The poem is sometimes erroneously divided, the second part beginning at "Whilst as fickle," etc.

As to the title of this collection of verses, "The Passionate Pilgrim," alliteration is the most important element. After that we note that the lover in Elizabethan literature often poses as a palmer or pilgrim.

A third edition in 1612 included poems by Heywood, who resented the liberty taken ("Apology for Actors," 1612), and added a statement that Shakespeare was "much offended with W. Jaggard that (altogether unknown to him) presumed to make so bold with his (*i.e.*, Shakespeare's) name." In consequence of this memorable protest Shakespeare's name was omitted from some copies.

(d) *The Phoenix and the Turtle*

In 1601 appeared Robert Chester's "Love's Martyr, or Rosalins complaint"; which was followed by an Appendix containing "a poetical essaie on the Phoenix and the Turtle." To this appendix Jonson, Chapman, and Marston contributed, as well as Shakespeare; at least his name appears as a contributor. In honour of Sir John Salisbury these poets versified the theme of the Phoenix (a woman) who loved the Turtle (a man); these two were consumed, and from their ashes arose the new Phoenix—perfect Love. Shakespeare was content to sing of the ideal passion and death of the lovers—"Leaving no posterity." The effort is not without charm. With stanza i. we may compare "The Tempest," III. iii. 21-24.

(e) The Sonnet "Phaethon to his friend Florio," prefixed to John Florio's "Second Fruits" (a book of dialogues, aphorisms, etc., in English and Italian, 1591), has some of Shakespeare's imagery, but not enough for identification; nor is it constructed on the Shakespearean model.



(f) The song "Take, oh take those lips away," at the opening of the fourth act in "Measure for Measure," is apparently left incomplete (cf. "Break off thy song"). It is printed with a second stanza—"Hide, oh hide those hills of snow," in the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's poems. The two stanzas are also printed in the play of "The Bloody Brother," and in "Rollo, Duke of Normandy." The second stanza, which may have been added by Fletcher, is inferior to the first, which is quite in Shakespeare's manner.

#### (6) LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST, 1591

##### *Historical Particulars*

"Love's Labour's Lost" is one of the fifteen plays that were published in Shakespeare's lifetime. It appeared in quarto form in the spring of the year 1598-9, with the following title-page: "A Pleasant Conceited Comedie called, Loues labors lost. As it vvas presented before her Highnes this last Christmas. Newly corrected and augmented By W. Shakespere." This is the first time that Shakespeare's name appears on the title-page of a published play.

This Quarto is reprinted in the Folio of 1623, where the trifling differences of text are probably due to accident. It was again published as a Quarto in 1631. It is included in the list of Meres in 1598 (see p. 22), and was mentioned by Drummond of Hawthornden in 1606.

From the words "newly corrected and augmented" on the title-page of the Quarto of 1598, we may almost infer that the play had been published at some earlier date. In his poem, "Alba. The Months Minde of a Melancholy Lover" (1598), Robert Tofte writes: "Loves Labor Lost I once did see, a Play ycleped so." Another interesting reference to the play occurs in a manuscript at Hatfield; Sir Walter Cope, writing to Lord Cranborne in 1604, says:

"Burbage ys come and Sayes therys no new playe that the quene hath not seene, but they have Revyved an olde one, cawled Loves Labore Lost, whiche for wytt and mirthe he sayes will please her excedingly. And thys ys apointed to be playd to Morrowe night at my Lord of Southamptons."

The date of the first draft might be as early as 1591, or even earlier; for although one of the books that may have been used by Shakespeare, the "Second Fruits" of John Florio (see p. 101) was published that year, it was probably accessible to the dramatist in MS.; and the same may be true of other publications mentioned here and elsewhere in reference to the chronology of Shakespeare's writings. Further, as the play was under revision till 1598, it incorporates material and topical allusion that falls within the period, 1590-1598.

Traces of this revision are still discernible; the lines in Act V. Sc. ii. from Biron's question in 827 to the end of Rosaline's reply, in 832, are presumably retained by oversight from an earlier draft; they should be struck out, being evidently expanded and re-inserted among lines 833-879. Again, in the speech of Biron, Act IV. Sc. iii., the rather poor passage "And where that . . . our learning there" (lines 296-317) is improved and distributed among lines 318-354.

Other suggestions for the date of the play arise out of its contemporary references and the sources of its matter; and these we may now consider. Besides Florio's "First Fruites" (1578), "which yeelde familiar speech, merie proverbes, wittie sentences and golden sayings," and the same author's "Second Fruits," above-mentioned, Shakespeare may have given careful attention to Thomas Wilson's "Art of Rhetorique," 1553, where some of the extravagances of Euphuism and other affectations of language were anticipated and criticised; to Lyly's Euphues itself ("Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit," 1580, and "Euphues and his England,"

1581); to Lyly in general, and his "Endymion" in particular; to Sidney's "Arcadia," 1590, where possibly he found a hint for his discourse on "discourse" at the opening of the Fifth Act; to the same writer's "Apology for Poetry" (written about 1581, published 1595); to Saviolo's book on Fencing, 1595; and to Dr. Giles Fletcher's "Of the Russe Commonwealth," 1591. Of contemporary incidents alluded to we may mention that the "dancing horse" of Act II. Sc. ii. was exhibited in London in 1589; that possibly the Masque in the Fifth Act recalled our relations with Russia in 1584; that Mothe, or La Mothe, was a French ambassador who left England in 1583, and a character who appears on other pages than Shakespeare's; and that Armado (a name perhaps suggested by the Armada) "the fantastical Spaniard," "a Monarcho," was a crazy foreigner who haunted the court of Elizabeth, and believed himself the sovereign of the world; he is mentioned in Scott's "Discoverie of Witchcraft," 1584, and was celebrated by Churchyard in a poem, "Fantasticall Monarcho's Epitaph." Biron and Longaville were historical adherents of the King of Navarre, and Chapman wrote "The Conspiracy of Duke Biron," and "The Tragedy of Biron," 1605. Dumain was the Duc de Maine, or Mayenne, a Frenchman who played a conspicuous part in the movements of Navarre; and lastly, Holofernes, who has been regarded—with little likelihood—as a reflection of John Florio, or of Thomas Hunt, Shakespeare's schoolmaster at Stratford, may have been suggested by a character *Paedantius* in a Latin comedy mentioned by Sir J. Harington in his "Apology for Poetry," 1591. Further, the style of the play, especially its abundance of rhyme, proclaims it to be of early date; and in respect of thought and diction it has many and close affinities with the Sonnets, the Poems, "Richard III," and yet others of Shakespeare's earlier productions.

As to the leading incidents of the play, these, if not

the entire plot, are founded, I think, on three events of contemporary interest. These were the projects of Academies for the training of young men, which were as much a matter for ridicule when Shakespeare wrote "Love's Labour's Lost" as Girton College would have been when Tennyson wrote his "Princess"; another event was a visit of Russian ambassadors to London in 1584, who were commissioned to obtain a wife for the Czar from among the women of the English nobility; and their reception by the ladies of Elizabeth's court is doubtless reflected in the Fifth Act; a third is the meeting (1586) between the King of France and Catherine de Medici which has its counterpart in the play in the meeting between the King of Navarre and the Princess of France. Upon these incidents and the "Academic" topic Shakespeare may have built his slender plot, unless he had before him some novel or play that has not come down to us.

The time of the action is two days: 1st day, Acts I. II., 2nd, Acts III.-V.

### *Critical Remarks*

Our first impressions on reading "Love's Labour's Lost" are these; we have a beginner's—a student's—exhibition of his wares, his accumulated studies, and reflections up to the time of writing; and what follows from the former, a beginner's essay in criticism, his examination of methods and materials of thought and expression, especially such as are becoming the fashion among his contemporaries. He is aware that some of these novelties known to us more or less accurately by the term Euphuism,<sup>1</sup> are of doubtful merit, and that others, whose date is earlier, may deserve the condemnation of

<sup>1</sup> Euphuism itself may be glanced at in the play; but more openly the poet laughs at the bombast and hyperbole of Armado; at the "silken terms precise," the repartee and the lyric affectations of the court; at the pedantic Latinisms of Holofernes; and at the abuses of alliteration, antithesis, and the like.

ridicule; he is further aware that his critical essay will have a reflex action, that it will be an invaluable aid to the formation of his own taste and style; he will see how words and phrases and rhymes and sentiments look when they are laughed at, and thereafter will be on his guard. But the fashion of speech will lead him on to the fashion of manners; he will glance at, haply he will again laugh at, the foibles of that social class to whom manners mostly appertain, namely the court and high society. This is the spirit, and this the substance of the play we are about to review.

But further, as quoted above (page 68),

Never durst poet touch a pen to write  
Until his ink were temper'd with Love's sighs;

therefore if Shakespeare is to reck his own rede, the framework of his drama will be a tale of love.

But of this, the main subject of "Love's Labour's Lost," I have spoken already in the chapter on the literary biography of Shakespeare; and something further will be said in the chapter on Shakespeare as a literary artist; at present I may repeat that we are dealing with a play of antitheta, a "Venus" and a "Lucrece," a "L'Allegro and an Il Penseroso," a plea for mirth and for seriousness, for action and for contemplation, a display of almost all topics set in almost all lights, of opinions, therefore, that are no more final than are the considerations of mere vocabulary and language. We are aware, however, that in his first essay this great genius condemns the falsehood of extremes, recognizes the essentials among the accidents, the follies of our existence, puts philosophy above dogma and common sense in its due season above both; and plucks from the tree of knowledge the fruit which hangs so high that few may reach it—the fruit of perfect charity. Hereby at the very outset you may know Shakespeare—perhaps from all his contemporaries except Spenser, Hooker, and Bacon.

Thus early, too, does Shakespeare use the drama as a mirror in which the age may see itself, and take warning and grow wiser at the sight, a use which he afterwards enlarges and insists upon in "Hamlet." Small wonder that before his period of authorship closed he had educated a people up to the level of the highest form and spirit of the highest art, the poetic drama. Herein again we distinguish Shakespeare from most of his contemporary dramatists.

These remarks are appropriate at the outset of our investigations, and will explain my purpose in placing "Love's Labour's Lost" at the head of this long list of the plays of Shakespeare; still the composition is of early date, and some of it, as I think, of the very earliest; though we must bear carefully in mind the fact already referred to, that the best passages may represent alterations and improvements effected at intervals up to the year 1598; and we must be prepared to meet with inferior work in some of the plays—or parts of them—that are to follow.

If now we glance at the form of the play, we again find it to be early and experimental work; it includes almost every sort of metrical and unmetrical composition—here is prose unadorned, prose ornate, and prose preposterous; here is verse that is doggerel and verse that is dignified and almost sublime; here is couplet and quatrain and sestet, and song and sonnet; and here—and finest of all—is the blank verse that enters boldly as if to proclaim its mighty and magnificent future as the form of the Shakespearean drama. Then, with regard to the plot, it is tentative, fanciful, and inorganic, while the characters are grouped with the stiff precision of a playwright who is anxious to keep them easily in mind, and who relies on antithesis more than on creative art.

It is not my part to tell over again a story which the drama may best tell for itself; but of the actors in that story something may be said; Biron, as I noticed in a

former chapter, comes nearest to Shakespeare, and is the leading spirit of the piece; he is followed at an interval by slighter figures, but Moth is a very interesting compound of young wit and old wisdom. The "picture of We Three," Don Armado, Sir Nathaniel, and Holofernes, is a brilliant first study in caricature; and Rosaline among the ladies has a pretty wit and a faculty of repartee that would be no disgrace to Beatrice and Rosalind. In fact, it is a play of words, not deeds, that we have before us; "the Latin hath saved your lives" says Tophas in "Endymion"; and dialogue supplies what is lacking in incident. Our remarks may close with a reference to Tennyson's "Princess," which is closely modelled on Shakespeare's pleasant and, considering the times, most instructive vindication of the existence of woman. (See also review of "Much Ado About Nothing" in this Chapter.)

#### (7) KING HENRY VI, PART I, 1590

##### *Historical Particulars*

Beyond the fact that we have no copy of "Henry VI, Part I" of earlier date than the Folio of 1623, and that the author was indebted mostly to the chronicles of Hall and Holinshed, we have few external particulars to offer. An entry in Henslowe's Diary, "March 3rd, 1591-2, Henry VI, *new*," probably refers to Shakespeare's play; and Nash writes in his "Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Divell"—which was licensed and published in the same year—"How would it have joyed brave Talbot (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his Tombe, he should triumphe againe on the Stage," etc.

Here, as is most likely, we have an allusion to the death of Talbot (Act IV., scenes v. vi. and vii).

Other hints as to the date of the play are supplied by material which may be traced to earlier sources; from

these I select "the rich jewell'd coffer of Darius"; this expression, though it occurs in other writers, may have been derived by the poet from Puttenham's "Art of English Poesie," 1589, where we read of "the rich jewel-coffer of Darius" in which the poems of Homer were carried. Altogether, I think we are not far wrong in assigning the play to the year 1590. Further, it is customary to suppose that we have in "1 Henry VI" an older play revised by Shakespeare; I think this is likely. Some critics, moreover, would refer the supposed early draft of "1 Henry VI" to an earlier stage in the history of the drama, and some would assign it to Greene, assisted, perhaps, by Peele, and even Marlowe; but spite of some classical mannerisms the text here and there is jejune and monotonous and not often like Greene; and I prefer to regard it as the handiwork of some unknown author which was afterwards revised by Shakespeare.

I have mentioned Hall and Holinshed as the chief authorities, but even at this early period we may remember that the literary work for which Shakespeare is responsible will take us at almost every turn to sources that are recondite or remote; this may be true of the dialogue between Joan of Arc and Burgundy (III. iii. 36-86) for which there is no authority in the chronicles.

The time analysis is: 1st day, I. i.-vi. Interval. 2nd day, II. i.-v. 3rd, III. i. Interval. 4th day, III. ii. 5th, III. iii. Interval. 6th day, III. iv.; IV. i. Interval. 7th day, IV. ii.-vii.; V. i.-iii. Interval. 8th day, V. iv. v.

### *Critical Remarks*

No better introduction, I am sure, can be found to Shakespeare's historical plays, than that which he has himself supplied in the Epilogue to "Henry V"; from this we may at least infer that he had dramatized or had taken a leading part in dramatizing the disastrous period of our history occupied chiefly by the reigns of Henry VI



and Richard III; and that his dramatic experiments had been favourably received.

If after taking this wider view we proceed to examine the object near at hand, namely, this "First Part of Henry VI," we shall experience a feeling of disappointment, for the play we are investigating is obscured by a haze of mystery. Of course we are pretty sure that Shakespeare did his share of collaborating, adapting, and retouching; nevertheless the considerations set forth in the preceding chapter should be present to our minds when we inquire into the authorship of the play—or, indeed, of the whole trilogy of "Henry VI." Fortunately in the case of the "First Part of Henry VI" we have no earlier draft or version (though there may have been such) on which we may build theories of multiple origin, and then proceed to raise yet more airy and multiple structures on the basis of the Folio version. Indeed, if we accept all the conjectures whereby these plays are divided piecemeal among Marlowe, Greene, Peele, Shakespeare, and yet other dramatists, the resulting miracle of homogeneity is greater than that of single authorship.

But although I distrust the minute partition which is sometimes postulated for these plays, I am sure that we should not too readily accept the theory of single authorship. On the other hand, we may trace through the three parts of "Henry VI" a continuity which bears witness to oneness of design and oneness of revision; to a leading author, who in the "First Part of Henry VI" (V. iii. 65, 66) writes, "She's beautiful; and therefore to be wooed: She is a woman; therefore to be won; which may be compared with the similar couplet (perhaps proverbial) in "Titus Andronicus" (II. i. 82, 83), and in "Richard III" (I. ii. 228, 229), or, again, with Greene's "Pasylla was a woman, and therefor to be won" (quoted by Baildon).

Or again, it was the author who in "2 Henry VI" (III. i. 335) writes, "Let pale-faced fear keep with the mean-born

man"; and in "Richard II" (I. i. 189), "Or with pale beggar-fear impeach my height"; or again, who in "3 Henry VI" (V. iv. 1, 2) writes, "Great lords, wise men ne'er sit and wail their loss, But cheerly seek how to redress their harms"; and in "Richard II" (III. ii. 178, 179), "My lord, wise men ne'er sit and wail their woes, But presently prevent the way to wail"; and in "Richard III" (II. ii. 103), "But none can cure their harms by wailing them." So also we have "2 Henry VI" (III. i. 203), "The map of honour," a figure that is repeated in "Richard II," "Lucrece" (twice), "The Sonnets" (twice), "Titus Andronicus," and "Richard III." Still more characteristic is the use of the word "buzz," as we find it in "2 Henry VI" (I. ii. 99), in "3 Henry VI" (V. vi. 86), in "Titus Andronicus" (IV. iv. 7), and in "Richard II" (II. i. 26). The number of such resemblances (see also below) inclines us to believe that the leading author who is thus present in each part of "Henry VI" is Shakespeare.

Now let us read the three parts in order, and draw our conclusions. We find that Part I is far inferior to the other two parts; it lacks most of all that truest test of Shakespeare's work, imagery; on the other hand, it has many ostentatious classical allusions;<sup>1</sup> and I have already spoken of the monotonous verse. Further, it makes but a poor attempt to dramatize the facts of history; more often it defies them; and it is the least organic member of the trilogy. Some would refer it to an early period of drama; certainly, unless a very early attempt, there is little of Shakespeare in Part I, as compared with the other two parts.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> But the abundant classical allusions here and in the next two parts, may some of them have been retained by Shakespeare in his process of revision, even those that appear only in the revised parts may have existed in a more perfect copy of the original of Parts 2 and 3, and lastly, Shakespeare no doubt allowed himself a beginner's licence of pedantry, as in "Love's Labour's Lost," where he laughs at the pedantry of others while he laughs away his own.

<sup>2</sup> And probably for the reason that he merely revised a play by another

Yet, as stated above, we assuredly trace a continuity through these three dramas which speaks of a unity of design and proclaims one leading author or reviser: we may trace it further still through all the histories of Shakespeare. (See Chapter VIII.)

We next conclude that the same hand revised all three parts; and next, that the hand which sketches Crookback in the three parts of "Henry VI" is the same hand that paints the lurid portrait in "Richard III"; next, and still more decidedly, as I shall explain in Section 14 of this chapter, the character of Henry VI throughout these three plays is not only the work of the artist who drew Richard II, but is also *an early study of which the later picture is but an elaboration*. We further notice, especially in the Second Part, what is either the verse of Marlowe, or a subtle imitation; also the classical allusions already referred to; and we detect an occasional influence of Seneca, and possibly of Greek tragedy. Finally, we become aware that the reviser has a wide acquaintance with general literature, when for example we see him replacing "Mighty Abradas The great Macedonian pirate" ("First Part of the Contention,"<sup>1</sup> scene xii, ll. 50-52), by "Bargulus, the strong Illyrian pirate" ("2 Henry VI," IV. i. 108).

From this general view of the three plays together we now return to our examination of Part I; and as to the various authors who are said to have had a share in its production, let us remember that Shakespeare is trying all sorts of experiments; that varying styles are discernible in many of his earlier plays—"Richard II" "John," "Romeo and Juliet," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Love's Labour's Lost"; and that in all these plays—as

hand, adding, however, for the purpose of his own continuation, such scenes as those of the Temple Garden, the wooing of Margaret, etc.; for his theme was "The Contention of the Houses of York and Lancaster."

<sup>1</sup> See Section 8; and for Abradas see Greene, "Penelope's Web." We may almost infer that this part of the "Contention" was written by Greene.

will be seen later—there is good enough and bad enough to astonish and perplex us.

Three passages in the play stand out from their context, and two are surely the work of Shakespeare. These three are the scene in the Temple Garden (II. iv.), the wooing of Margaret (V. iii.), and some of the Talbot episodes in Act IV. It may be asked, "And what are the marks of Shakespeare's handiwork?" To answer in detail would be impossible here; let me say generally that any student of Shakespeare must recognize at least a freer and more musical verse, and an abundance of apt figure in the first of the two scenes above mentioned; briefly, it has more poetry and more dramatic power; and as to Shakespeare's early thought and manner, it is abundantly present. Although such details are beyond the province of this book, I shall give examples, on rare occasions, and for the rest I must ask the reader to believe that my generalizations are in every instance based on the like particulars of fact. In the Temple Garden scene we have "He bears him on the place's privilege," and in "Richard II," "Presuming on an ague's privilege;" we have "By him that made me, I'll maintain my words On any plot of ground in Christendom," which takes us to "Richard II" (I. i. 64-68); again "my blood-drinking hate," may be compared with the "blood-drinking sighs," and "blood-consuming sighs," of Part II (III. ii. 61, 63), or the "blood-sucking sighs," of Part III (IV. iv. 22), or with the "dark blood-drinking pit" of "Titus Andronicus" (II. iii. 224), or "dry sorrow drinks our blood," in "Romeo and Juliet" (III. v. 59); we next notice, "I love no colours; and, without all colour," where we have a figure and a quibble dear to Shakespeare, as every reader must know. But I pass on to the wooing of Margaret by Suffolk; here the voice of Shakespeare is heard less distinctly; yet the episode, if not his by design, may preserve some touches of his revising hand; I have already quoted the couplet, "She's beautiful," etc. (lines

77, 78, see p. 110); also lines 56, 57 might be compared with "A Midsummer Night's Dream," IV. i. 47, 48; and the figure "To be mine own attorney in this case" (l. 166) will be repeated half a dozen times in the plays of Shakespeare's first period; again, the line (192) "And natural graces that extinguish art" contains a thought which is repeated in one form or another perhaps more than a dozen times in Shakespeare's writings. Still, I attach little importance to parallel passages in this scene; yet from other thoughts and expressions that bear the mark of Shakespeare, I may select:

To be a queen in bondage is more vile  
Than is a slave in base servility;

Or, if not by Shakespeare, such lines must be the work of Marlowe; but again, I lay no undue stress on the evidence of single lines.

I must not give more space to this subject, yet I have but suggested what may be done; for I must add that these resemblances to other passages, especially in the earlier plays of Shakespeare, are to be met with elsewhere in this "First Part of Henry VI" (*e.g.*, IV. v.), and sometimes in more convincing numbers.

We will now examine the third passage—notably Sc. v., vi., and vii., Act IV. Here we have mostly couplets, not dramatically justified, but experimental, or, at the least, conventional; they recall an older style of tragic drama, and Shakespeare gives us another example in "Hamlet," where, however, they are introduced advisedly. The tragic couplets before us are not without merit; they are impressive, though not so characteristic as the other two passages. I see no reason why they should not be the work of Shakespeare—an experiment, I repeat.

We have yet to consider the Joan of Arc scenes, especially V. iv.; here we are prejudiced not so much against the verse, as against the treatment of the fair

maid of France, as we now know her; we hope the writer is not Shakespeare; we might hope it could be no writer at all. I will state some considerations for and against; Shakespeare, at any rate, has sanctioned the presence of this scene; that goes for a good deal; next, (1) many English characters meet with harsh treatment in these early chronicles and plays, and Joan was not English, but French; (2) more important still, she was regarded as a witch; (3) the sketch of Joan in this play, if not less repulsive than that of the chronicles, makes some attempt at justice (lines 36-53); (4) we may fairly say that the writer of the drama would be compelled either to omit the character altogether (which was impossible), or to bow before (a) the Chronicles, (b) popular belief and prejudice, (c) what was probably, at least in part, his own mistaken conviction. However, for the relief of any who may think Shakespeare's honour is threatened by this scene, I may add that if we place it under the microscope we find that only the lines above mentioned, 36-53, bear any distinct marks of Shakespeare's handling; again I will support my general statement: lines 52, 53,

Whose maiden blood, thus rigorously effused,  
Will cry for vengeance at the gates of heaven,

may be compared with "Richard II," I. i. 116-118:

Whose blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries  
Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth  
To me for justice and rough chastisement;

and in the same play "Heaven" will "rain hot vengeance" on offenders' heads. (For "Abel" see "1 Henry VI," I. iii. 40.)

On the other hand, in the remainder of the scene we have a large proportion of words: "miser" (*i.e.*, "wretch"), "bachelorship," "preciseness," "reflex" ("reflect"?), that are not elsewhere found in Shakespeare; also a number—"Decrepit," "collop," "ratsbane," "a-field," "juggling,"

"obstacle" (unless a perversion for "obstinate," in the manner of Mrs. Quickly), "Pyramus," "Astraea," "Adonis' gardens," "homicides," "Machiavel"—that are rarely found; but I lay no great stress on the evidence of vocabulary; Shakespeare often made experiments in vocabularies that were afterwards abandoned; and "misconceived" (l. 49, "misjudging one") is a single instance of the word. Yet I may note that these rare words (rare at least in Shakespeare), "practisants," "corrosive," "extirped," "expulsed," "periapts," "repugn," "disanimate"—occur chiefly in the Joan of Arc scenes, and are almost altogether absent from the scene of the Temple Garden and the quaint lament of the rhyming couplets.

But again, for other signs of Shakespeare's work, whether original or of supervision, I have no space; yet I must conclude with the important reflection that we have no evidence to show *when* he made this or that revision or addition; for all we know to the contrary these corrections may be separated by intervals of several years; and this applies yet more forcibly to many others of the plays we now proceed to examine.

#### (8) KING HENRY VI, PART II, 1592

##### *Historical Particulars*

"The Second Part of Henry the Sixth," as it appears in the Folio of 1623, is based on a play which was entered in the Stationers' Register, 12th March, 1593, and was published in Quarto in the year 1594. This is "The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster, with the death of the Good Duke Humphrey And the Banishment and Death of the Duke of Suffolke, and the Tragicall End of the proud Cardinall of Winchester, with the notable Rebellion of Jacke Cade, and the Duke of Yorkes first Claime unto the Croune. Printed by Thomas Creede for Thomas Millington, 1594."

This was reprinted in 1600, and in 1619 was published with Shakespeare's name.

The Folio version differs greatly from "The First Part of the Contention"; among its more than 3,000 lines are some 520 lines of the older play, and about 840 altered lines; the remainder, about 1,700 lines, being new.

The materials of these plays are again taken mainly from Hall and Holinshed, but other authorities were consulted. Occasionally, the facts of history are departed from, or distorted, or enlarged. We may add that the time of the play of "2 Henry VI" (on the stage) is fourteen days, with intervals representing about two years; an approximate date is 1592.

### *Critical Remarks*

Glancing back at the former part of "Henry VI," and then again on this drama, we are astonished at the general advance it displays in both literary and dramatic craft; and we welcome the evident and abundant genius of Shakespeare.

Next we examine "The First Part of the Contention," and we miss most of all the *poetry* of the Folio version; of this a very large proportion is absent; it is as though the transcriber of the former play skipped or stripped ornament; for example, where Warwick (III. ii. 160-178) describes the appearance of Duke Humphrey's corpse, the older play reduces the nineteen lines to eight, and further mutilates them:

His fingers spred abroad as one that graspt for life,  
Yet was by strength surprisde: the least of these are probable.

On the other hand, certain passages in "The First Part of the Contention" appear to have been re-written, enlarged, and improved; I should instance the speech of Eleanor in II. iv. 27, beginning in each version with the line: "Ah, Gloster, teach me to forget myself"; but the Folio, which makes it just twice as long, enriches it more-



over with gems from Greek tragedy. Thirdly, as we have seen (page 112), those minor improvements have been effected which testify to a comprehensive and careful revision of an original text.

From all this we infer that the reviser of the Folio-version may or may not have had by him a copy of "The Second Part of the Contention," but some older MS. of the play of which the latter was a piratical and a clumsy transcript.

As to this original manuscript, besides the work and general authorship of Shakespeare, it almost certainly included contributions from Marlowe, and less certainly from Greene; and some would add Peele. Perhaps we may suppose that Marlowe and Greene had worked together at the earlier play; that Marlowe subsequently called in Shakespeare to assist him in revising it; and that ultimately Shakespeare re-wrote the piece as we find it in the Folio of 1623. This theory explains the bitterness of Greene's remarks on Shakespeare which are referred to in the next Section. Beyond this general admission of the possible collaboration or contribution on the part of other dramatists, I shall make little reference to the subject; for when we set aside all the passages that we may reasonably identify as Shakespeare's, there will not be very much left even for Marlowe. Resemblances of thought and diction, especially and of course to such early histories as "Richard III" and "Richard II," are abundant; they are still more abundant in the next play; but these I will avoid; I will now cite something quite different; it shall be the speech of Clifford (V. iii. 31-65); here is an example of Shakespeare's later, almost his best, tragic style—the style of *Macbeth*, for instance;<sup>1</sup> indeed, I will depart from my usual cautious methods, and confine my remarks to a single line: "The silver livery of advised age;" I will not

<sup>1</sup> There is none of this in "The First Part of the Contention." A good example of Marlowe's style will be found in "2 Henry VI," IV. i.

say that every word in this line is the property of Shakespeare, but all who know the poet will admit his prior, if not his sole claim to it.<sup>1</sup> But again I lay no stress on these verbal tests, and as we leave such details, it will be readily understood that the poet's creating or directing genius is yet more manifest by sight or sound in the larger dramatic elements of landscape and melody, of character, and plot. I need hardly add what must be evident to all, that the humorous prose scenes—or most of them—are in Shakespeare's manner, and fore-run a hundred such in the later plays.

(9) KING HENRY VI, PART III, 1592

*Historical Particulars*

"The Third Part of King Henry VI." is based, like the former part, on an earlier play. This is "The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the Death of good King Henrie the Sixt, with the whole Contention betweene the two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke, as it was sundrie times acted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Pembroke his Seruants. Printed at London . . . 1595."

It was reprinted in 1600, and was again published in 1619, with the title: "The Second Part of the Contention of the two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster, containing the tragedy of Richard Duke of York, and the Good King Henry the Sixth." Thus the play is known by two titles, "The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York," or, "The Second Part of the Contention." It was bound up with "The First Part of the Contention" mentioned in the former section, and the volume was entitled "The Whole Contention betweene the two Famous Houses,

<sup>1</sup> Not quite so much to the point, but worth noting is:

As did Aeneas old Anchises bear,  
So bear I thee upon my manly shoulders,

which will compare with "Julius Caesar," I. ii. 112-116.

Lancaster and Yorke . . . by William Shakespeare, Gent.  
 . . . 1619."

This time the Folio version of 1623 follows the older play more closely; of its 3,000 lines about 1,000 are new; the remainder being retained, or slightly altered. For the relations between the revised play and its original, see former Section, page 118.

It has already been stated that Greene refers to this play in his "Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance," 1592. The passage will be found on page 18; but we may note here that besides the punning description of Shakespeare, or "Shakescene," we have a reference to the line ("3 Henry VI," I. iv, 137), "O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide," which is found also in the earlier play, and in each case should have been written by the pen of Shakespeare, for the speech in which the line occurs is in Shakespeare's manner. Further, there can be little doubt that Greene was surprised and annoyed at the young actor's<sup>1</sup> success as a dramatist; and not merely as a reviser of plays, but as an original author who was destined to rival Marlowe and others of the "university wits." It does not imply that Shakespeare's handling of any part of "Henry VI" must be challenged as base plagiarism.

In this play again, the authorities chiefly consulted are Hall and Holinshed; but the writer—or writers—have access to other sources of information, as, for example, in the long scene (III. iii.), which describes Warwick's negotiations with the French King and Lady Bona. As to the time of this play, twenty days are represented on the stage, with intervals, suggesting a period of about one year.

### *Critical Remarks*

Although the revision of the earlier play is less rigorously effected by the author in this Third Part, the

<sup>1</sup> I.e., Shakespeare's; but Greene lays unfair stress on the word "Player"; see page 18.

resulting drama is not much below the former in merit, nor is the presence of Shakespeare much less apparent. Indeed, as I have stated already, Henry VI is a forecast of Richard II, both in regard to his character and his language. But our investigation of the character of Richard II (see Section 14) will extend to all the three parts of "Henry VI," though we do not see much of Henry in Part I.

As to "Richard III," both the play and the style of the play and the character find more than a mere forecast in this same trilogy.<sup>1</sup> The description of "that devil's butcher," "misshapen Dick" is at times suggestive of Marlowe;<sup>2</sup> "I that have neither pity, love, nor fear" is almost a line from the "Jew of Malta" (see page 125); but in all his dealings with this character Shakespeare is so profoundly impressed by the creator of Barabas and Tamburlaine that even the most Marlowesque of these passages may be the handiwork of an admiring disciple.

### (10) KING RICHARD III, 1593

#### *Historical Particulars*

As may be seen in the concluding speech of Richmond, the play of "Richard III" completes the story of "divided York and Lancaster"; that speech, moreover, prays for the blessing of heaven upon this "fair conjunction"; and then bids its own day take careful heed of the moral resultant. Such a purpose, we may add, runs through all this "feigned history" of Shakespeare.

In other words, "Richard III" naturally follows the Third Part of "Henry VI," and as naturally it precedes "Richard II," which will begin another and a similar

<sup>1</sup> Again I have no space for illustration beyond the merest suggestion: "Down, down to Hell, and say I sent thee thither," of "3 Henry VI," V. vi. 67, is thus echoed in "Richard III," I. ii. 107: "Let him thank me, that help to send him thither."

<sup>2</sup> Especially in the passages near the close of "Henry VI," Part 3.

cyclic lesson drawn from the annals of our race. Further, as we have noticed already (p. 121), the drama of "Richard III" begins in the Third Part of "Henry VI"; at least the first act of the tragedy may be read there; there also the remaining acts are promised to us, in the soliloquy of Richard (Sc. vi.); and we find no suggestion of this soliloquy in Holinshed.

Again, as the Third Part of "King Henry VI" concludes with the words of Edward, "Now am I seated," sqq., so its continuation, "Richard III," opens with the sentiment dramatically repeated by one of these brothers: "Now is the winter," sqq.; and there is more in the context. But this subject, as also the date of the play, are further considered in Chapter VIII.

"Richard III" was thus entered in the Stationers' Register—"Oct. 20th 1597; Andrew Wise. The Tragedie of Kinge Richard the Third, with the death of the Duke of Clarence." It was Andrew Wise who on the 29th of August had entered "Richard II."

In the same year appeared the First Quarto, with the following title page: "The Tragedy of King Richard the Third. Containing His treacherous Plots against his brother Clarence; the pittiefull murther of his innocent nephewes: his tyranicall vsurpation: with the whole course of his detested life, and most deserued death. As it hath beene lately Acted by the right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his servants. . . ."

The Second Quarto was published in 1598 with a title-page similar to the former, but bearing the name of Shakespeare; this name appears in all the subsequent Quartos, which substantially repeat the title-page of the second, adding, however, that their edition is "newly augmented"; but this is not the case. The remaining Quartos, anterior to the Folio, are dated 1602, 1605, 1612, 1622.

The relation between these Quartos and the Folio ver-

sion of 1623 is probably as follows: the early Quartos were printed from a transcript—perhaps shortened—of an earlier manuscript, the Folio from a transcript of a revised manuscript with occasional reference to the 1602 Quarto. But the Folio version seems to have been tampered with by some unskilful hand; the Quarto line (II. iv. 65), "Or let me die, to look on death no more," in the Folio reads, "Or let me die, to look on *earth* no more," and thus loses its point, its force, its touch of Shakespeare, its meaning in the context—"Nothing but sights of death." Or, again, the Quarto line, "Chop off his head, man; somewhat we will do," is but doubtfully improved by the Folio, "Chop off his head;—something we will determine." On the other hand, the Folio:

My lord, I hold my life as dear as yours;  
And never, in my days, I do protest,  
Was it so precious to me as 'tis now,

is mostly an improvement on the Quarto;

My lord, I hold my life as dear as you do yours,  
And never, in my life, I do protest,  
Was it more precious to me than 'tis now;

at least we discover in the Folio reading a most interesting solicitude of revision. The Folio, moreover, contains more than a hundred new and important lines; yet again it omits the fine passages IV. i. 98-104, and IV. ii. 102-120. I may add that the well-known "Conscience, avaunt! Richard's himself again," and "Off with his head!—So much for Buckingham," are from Colley Cibber's popular but vulgarized version of the Tragedy (1700) which is still a favourite on the stage.

Shakespeare's authority for "Richard III" was mainly Holinshed (ed. 1586-7), who copies from Hall. These chroniclers are indebted to Sir Thomas More's "History of Edward V and Richard III" (1557). Another play on the subject of Richard III was entered in the Stationers' Registers, 19th June, 1594, and published in the same

year; this is "The True Tragedie of Richard the Third; wherein is showne the death of Edward the Fourth, with the smothering of the two young Princes in the Tower; with a lamentable end of Shore's wife, an example for all wicked women. And lastly, the conjunction and ioyning of the two noble Houses, Lancaster and Yorke."

This re-issue of an old play may be accounted for on the ground of dramatic rivalry; not seldom an opposition play was performed by a rival company (see Section 18 of this Chapter). Shakespeare's debt to "The True Tragedie" is very trifling:

Methinks their ghosts come gaping for revenge,  
Whom I have slain in reaching for a crown. . . .

So also, "A horse, a horse, a fresh horse," is the ancestor of Shakespeare's famous line; mere suggestions, such as the foregoing, would be all that this crude drama could supply. Another old play on the subject was the "Ricardus Tertius" of Dr. Thomas Legge, which was acted at St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1579. It is probably the one referred to by Sir J. Harrington in his "Apologie for Poetry" (1591), and by Nash in "Have with you to Saffron Walden" (1596). Other sources of information drawn upon by Shakespeare are too minute for reference here.

"Richard III" (Chapter III, page 22), is one of the plays mentioned by Meres in 1598; it is probably referred to by Weever in his "Epigrammes" (1595), (see "Romeo and Juliet"): "Romeo, Richard, more whose names I know not." It was popular, and may have given hints to a song in "Epigrammes," by Sir John Davies (about 1596), to Locrine (1595); and Mr. Stokes thinks it may have taken a hint from "A Warning for Fair Women" (1589):

Now is the hour come  
To put your love unto the touch, to try  
If it be current, or base counterfeit,

which may be compared with IV. ii. 8, 9.

The time analysis is: 1st day. I. i., ii., interval. 2nd day. I. iii., iv.; II. i., ii. 3rd. II. iii. 4th. II. iv. 5th. III. i. 6th. III. ii.-vii. 7th. IV. i. 8th. IV. ii.-v., interval. 9th day. V. i., interval. 10th day. V. i., and first half of iii. 11th. V., second half of iii., and iv. v.

*Critical Remarks*

The history of a flower lies not in itself, but in all the past growth of root, stem, and branch, and it may be, of leaf. So is it, as we have seen, with the dramas of Shakespeare; so is it also with the chief characters in these dramas. And although I shall illustrate this principle especially when I come to examine Shakespeare's conception of Hamlet, I shall not by any means ignore it in this brief consideration of "Richard III." (See also Chapter VIII.)

Four influences are primarily concerned in the evolution of this most striking among the figures of Shakespeare's earlier plays; the first proceeds from Marlowe, the artist who had sketched Tamburlaine and Barabas—creatures that, like Richard III, might "Set the murderous Machiavel to school" ("3 Henry VI," III. ii. 193); Tamburlaine who would "Make a bridge of murdered carcasses" (Part 2, i. 3.); or Barabas who is "void of these affections, Compassion, love, vain hope, and heartless fear," which we have compared (page 121) with Richard's "I that have neither pity, love, nor fear" (3 Henry VI," V. vi. 67).

The second influence is not wholly distinct from the former; it is that of the old stage vice,<sup>1</sup> villain—nay, the "plain devil" as well ("Richard III," I. iii. 246).

Not a few of the utterances of Richard bring with them echoes from Hell-Mouth, or the rollicking antic on the devil's back: "Down, down, to Hell, and say I sent thee

<sup>1</sup> Thus, like the formal vice, Iniquity.

("Richard III," III. i. 82.)



thither" ("3 Henry VI," V. vi. 67); "So long as hell and Richard likes of it" ("Richard III," IV. iv. 354); "Let us to't pell-mell, If not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell" (*Ibid.*, V. iii. 312); "To her I go, a jolly thriving wooer" (*Ibid.*, IV. iii. 43); (but cf. Tamburlaine's wooing).

In this connection we note the superstition and the personal deformity so often associated with the typical villain of the older stage; Richard is an "Elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog"; and again,

To disproportion me in every part, . . .  
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them, . . .  
And therefore . . .  
I am determined to prove a villain.

Of this crude villainy there is much less in Iago, as we shall notice below.

The third influence is that "Right divine of Kings to govern wrong," the tradition of sacred and resistless, if selfish power in the sovereign, which was always present to Shakespeare when he dramatized history; but first we will quote Marlowe's "Tamburlaine":

Thus am I right, the scourge of highest Jove . . .  
In every part proportioned like the man,  
Should make the world subdue to Tamburlaine.

So in "Richard III" (I. i. 151-152, and I. iii. 263-265), we read:

God take King Edward to his mercy,  
And leave the world for me to bustle in.  
  
I was born so high,  
Our aery buildeth in the cedar's top,  
And dallies with the wind, and scorns the sun.

This accident of kingship is, of course, Richard's chief title to tragic greatness (see Chapter VIII); and further, as a king, he is the champion or the avenger of the House of York. Associated with this is a certain intellectual superiority, which sets him far above the minor characters of the play; and finally we must note the significant lines

"And this word love . . . I am myself alone" ("3 Henry VI," V. vi. 81-83), in which we have a forecast of both Iago and Coriolanus, as in "Othello," I. iii. 311-336, and "Coriolanus," V. iii. 33-37.

Deformed as he is ("3 Henry VI," III. ii. 153 *sqq.*) the character nevertheless must add to the qualities above mentioned those paltry animal attributes of mere physical courage—daring—ferocity:

A thousand hearts are great within my bosom.

I think there be six Richmonds in the field;

Five have I slain to-day instead of him.

But in the presence of the supernatural, when the lights burn blue, even this human animal must quail; he becomes self-reflective, and coward conscience afflicts him:

Shadows to-night

Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard

Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers.

I shall despair. There is no creature loves me.

The speech from which I quote these lines should be compared with that of Satan in "Paradise Lost," IV. 32-113; and as with Satan, so with Richard; the intention "to prosper and repent" (IV. iv. 397) finds no resting-place; there is no "room for repentance, none for pardon left"; the reflective mood passes; and there follows a yet more unflinching and desperate devilry:

Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls;

Conscience is but a word that cowards use.

At this point, also, Richard differs from Iago who would have addressed the dismal array of ghosts with the calmness of Brutus, and to whom the words coward and conscience were almost devoid of even a transitory meaning.

He should also be compared with Macbeth; and here the resemblances are often as striking as are the many contrasts with Iago; and they will be obvious to every reader. (See Section 34 of this Chapter.)

The fourth influence I may describe as a beginner's avoidance of the complex. "I am deformed," and therefore, "I am determined to prove a villain"; this is nine-tenths of the character—it is merely desperate, not interesting—at least, not so interesting as the complex. Nothing is left to our imagination; and though villainy, like all other passions and emotions, becomes reflex, though it is "like the hand, and grows with using,"<sup>1</sup> yet we never lose sight of Richard's deformity,<sup>2</sup> which may be compared with the illegitimacy of Edmund in "King Lear."

More subtle, we repeat, is the villainy of Iago:

How am I, then, a villain,  
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course  
Directly to his good?

Though in the context he gives us what is perhaps a reliable clue to his character; (see, however, Section 31):

When devils will the blackest sins put on,  
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows  
As I do now.

There are fifteen years, shall we say, between these two great studies in villainy.<sup>3</sup> Richard, once more, is the plain devil; as to "honest Iago," we cannot identify his devilry even if we look down towards his feet.<sup>4</sup> Again, in the case of Iago, we soon forget the forced, conventional, motiveless motives that are scattered about the play; for example, his wife was nothing to him:<sup>5</sup> "Ere I would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity

<sup>1</sup> I am in, So far in blood, that sin will pluck on sin.  
(Cf. with "Macbeth," III. iv. 136-138.)

<sup>2</sup> But we very soon lose sight, as does Shakespeare, of his first motive:

My thoughts aim at a further matter; I  
Stay not for love of Edward, but the crown.  
("3 Henry VI," IV. i. 125, 126.)

<sup>3</sup> Edmund in "King Lear" almost ranks with these, but not Iachimo.

<sup>4</sup> "Othello," V. ii. 286.

<sup>5</sup> His jealousy is doubtful; certainly it did not imply love.

with a baboon. . . . Virtue! a fig." He has no persistent or well-defined grudge against the Moor, but he has against *virtue*: "Reputation is an idle and most false imposition." . . . "So will I turn her virtue into pitch, and out of her own goodness make the net That shall enmesh them all."

Iago is a more artistic incarnation of Evil; and those critics have come near the truth who speak of his "motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity," or describe him as "an inarticulate poet," or as an "artist in villainy." But see Section 31 of this Chapter.

This simplicity in the character of Richard III is the simplicity of an early sketch; it is on a level with the simplicity of the verse music of the play, its dialogue, its neglect of minor characters, its obvious sequence of incident.

Again, some aspects of the play lead us to mention another influence, that, possibly, of Euripides, but more certainly of Seneca; the latter is clearly marked, and it will be referred to again in these pages. Meanwhile, we may point to the poet's art in heightening the effect of the catastrophe in his drama; he allows the protagonist to present his "insolence" in the form of a climax (IV. iii. 36-43).

Now note the stage direction that follows: "Enter Catesby," which we may read: "Enter Nemesis." Similarly in "Julius Caesar," when the conspirators are flushed with their full success, "Enter a Servant," and the action "swings round." As in that play, so also in this, there follows the orderly accomplishment of doom.

But the merits and demerits of Shakespeare's "Richard III" as a tragedy will be further examined in Chapter VIII. Here we may repeat that in this presentation of naked villainy Shakespeare proves himself the beginner; and not so much because he disregarded Aristotle, with whom he seems to have been acquainted at a very early date, but because a first attempt at tragedy compelled caution and

an avoidance of what was both more subtle and more complex; he is a little more ambitious when he sketches Richard II; but many years will pass before he ventures upon such marvellous creations as Hamlet and Iago.

# (11) TITUS ANDRONICUS, 1590

## *Historical Particulars*

We begin with the Quarto of 1600, which has the following title: "The most lamentable Romaine Tragedie of Titus Andronicus. As it hath sundry times been playde by the Right Honourable the Earle of Penbrooke, the Earle of Darbie, the Earle of Sussex, and the Lorde Chamberlaine theyr Servants. At London, Printed by I. R. for Edward White, . . . 1600."

This was followed in 1611 by the Second Quarto, which differs but slightly from the former, and states on the title-page, "As has sundry times been playde by the King's Maiestie's Servants."

Next, in the Folio of 1623, the play appears between "Coriolanus" and "Romeo and Juliet," with the heading, "The lamentable Tragedy of Titus Andronicus."

Between this Folio version and the two Quartos there are considerable differences, evidently due to supervision by the author; only the Folio gives us the second scene of the third act; this scene is of much interest to the reader, but is not so essential to the theatre, and might even raise a laugh if put on the stage.

We have now to bring forward some references to this, or to kindred plays previous to 1600. These are, in order of date: 1591. "tittus and vespacia" (as a new play; Henslowe's Diary). 1593. (January 23) "titus and ondronicus," acted for the first time by "the Earle of Essex, his men," January 23rd (Henslowe's Diary). 1593, February 6th. "John Danter. . . a booke intituled a Noble Roman Historye of Tytus Andronicus." . . . "Entord also with

him, by warrant from Mr. Woodcock, the ballad thereof" (Stationers' Register). 1594. "Titus Andronicus," first printed in Quarto and acted by the servants of the "Earle of Darbie, Pembroke, and Essex" (Gerard Langbaine, "Account of the English Dramatic Poets," 1691); and in 1598 it is mentioned by Meres.

To the above must be added the following passage from the Induction to Ben Jonson's "Bartholomew Fair": "He that will swear that *Jeronimo* or *Andronicus* are the best plays yet shall pass unexcepted at here, as a man whose judgment shows it is constant and has stood still these twenty-five or thirty years."

On this we remark that Kyd's "Jeronimo, or The Spanish Tragedie," was licensed in 1592 (first extant edition, 1594), and that if we choose Jonson's twenty-five years, and take them somewhat generally, they will carry us back to 1591 or perhaps 1590, which furnish, as I think, an approximate date for the composition of Shakespeare's play.

There are yet to be mentioned Dutch and German versions of Titus Andronicus, none of which seem to have been founded on Shakespeare's drama, but they were possibly indebted to the "tittus and vespacia" in the above list, as Shakespeare also may have been. Nor have we any certain knowledge as to the authorship of "titus and andronicus" of 1593. As regards the play mentioned by Langbaine, that is most probably Shakespeare's, but how far it differs from the Quartos, and again, from the Folio version, it is impossible to say. It will be noticed that "Essex," in the title of this play of 1594, is changed to "Sussex" in 1600, a change which is doubtless due to the fall of Essex. Finally, as regards the ballad of 1593, which may have been extant for some time previous, it is probably the one included in Percy's "Reliques," and to this ballad Shakespeare's play might appear to be indebted:

He, being slain, was cast in cruel wise  
 Into a darksome den from light of skies :  
 The cruel Moore did come that way as then  
 With my three sonnes, who fell into the den.

Here we have the doubtful incident of the "subtle hole . . . Whose mouth is covered with rude-growing briars" (II. iii. 198, 9); also, the somewhat inexplicable line of the ballad, "I shot my arrowes towards heaven hie" finds its counterpart in Act IV, Scene iii. And, generally, the play follows the ballad (or the ballad the play) with faithfulness to incident.

If we trace the subject of "Titus Andronicus" to some earlier sources, we find, as so often, that the main stream of story is fed by tributaries. Apart from the affluents from classic ground<sup>1</sup> which will be mentioned later, we have a conjunction of the "Moore which did murders, like was nere before," and of the unkindly alliance of black (especially Moor) with white, "And soe in time a blackamore she bred." The former of these stories exists in Pontano, Bandello, Belleforest, and others, and the latter, or part of it, appears frequently in early or contemporary literature, and is best known to us by Shakespeare's "Othello."

In regard to Shakespeare's authorship of "Titus Andronicus," too much has been made of a statement by Edward Ravenscroft, who "about the time of the Popish Plot revised and altered" Shakespeare's drama; "I have been told," says Ravenscroft, "by some anciently conversant with the stage, that it was not originally his (Shakespeare's), but brought by a private author to be acted, and he only gave some master touches to one or two of the principal characters."

As a matter of literary history this may be worth mentioning, but Ravenscroft's tradition is by no means trustworthy, as we may discover in the following section.

<sup>1</sup> The scene is Rome (not in Folio), but there is little enough of Roman history. Of classical authors Ovid and Seneca are most fully represented in the play.

It may be added that a 1594 Quarto of "Titus Andronicus" is said to have been discovered quite recently in Sweden.

The time analysis is: 1st day, I.; II. i. 2nd., II. ii.-iv.; III. i. Interval. 3rd day, III. ii. Interval. 4th day, IV. v.

### *Critical Remarks*

After referring to the Introductory remarks in Chapter V, I shall state briefly with regard to the production and the authorship of "Titus Andronicus," that I consider it to be in great part the work of Shakespeare. Possibly he has revised an older play; it might be by the author of "Selimus, Emperor of the Turks" (1594), where the blank verse and some of the incidents have resemblances to "Titus Andronicus." Further, the author of "Selimus" (some say Greene) may be responsible for the original draft of "Henry VI," Part I; and Shakespeare's relation to that play may be repeated in the case of "Titus Andronicus."

Or if Shakespeare wrote the whole of the play, we might date his first draft about 1590, and presume that he revised it some three or four years later, when he may have adorned his work with such fragments of contemporary material as are found, for example, in Peele's "Honour of the Garter," 1593.

Either theory, of revision, or of authorship and revision (and I prefer the former), will account for the two styles of verse that we seem to discover in "Titus Andronicus"; and, finally, I am disposed to accept every line as Shakespeare's, or as chosen by him from some original or originals. Moreover, when comparing it with contemporary work of the kind, I think favourably of the performance as a whole; and I regard "Titus Andronicus" as Shakespeare's first essay in tragic drama; I omit piece-work that may have fallen to his lot.

The wonder is that the play is so good; there is little enough that might not have come from the pen of Shake-



speare at this early time, and there is a great deal that could scarcely have been written by any other writer at any time, and no one, as I think, but Shakespeare, could have written the play as a whole; it compares at many points—points of manner, treatment, thought, phrase, rhythm, diction—with other plays by the same author; moreover it discovers to us the germs of many of the poet's later tragic characters, incidents and situations; and although in the main it is experimental, Marlowesque, laboured, and adapted to a contemporary taste for the cruder devices and effects of tragedy, it nevertheless ascends not seldom to Shakespeare's higher heaven of invention, and displays his power of informing the body of a type with the soul of an individual, of infusing into the conventional puppet an original life; and finally, it sets forth his purpose or his practice of rounding off a feast of horrors with Aristotle's saving grace of pity and fear, his purpose or his practice of subordinating the action to the actors, the fable to the moral, of teaching us that vengeance is wrong, and love is right, because kind nature doth require it so (V. III. 168).

The play, as I firmly believe, does all this, and does it so unequivocally that it may fairly stand as a genuine example of Shakespeare's early attempts at tragedy.

But I must give some space to an objection put forward by critics who might otherwise accept the play as genuine; it was impossible, they tell us, that Shakespeare should have chosen a theme so repulsive; but let me point out first of all that their admission of his joint or part authorship involves the same difficulty; surely he would not have lent his hand to an enterprise that was repugnant to his tastes and his convictions! But I think that our judgement under this head should be based on the following considerations; Shakespeare was a beginner; he was more ready to respond to popular taste and demand—and this was the heyday of the drama of horrors as Dryden's was

of the more infamous drama of debauchery—he was more inclined to follow classical precedent,<sup>1</sup> “the tale of Tereus” (“Cymbeline,” II. ii. 45), of Lucrece, who is mentioned so often in his plays, and to whom about this time he dedicates one of the best efforts of his poetic genius. To these we add that in regard to mutilation, we have in “Titus Andronicus” no such horrors as are displayed in “King Lear” (III. viii. 67-71).

Let us reflect in either case that some classic and other earlier dramas were worse; that the times were cruel and coarse; that stage contrivances were clumsy,<sup>2</sup> and made horrors less horrible, and called upon the dramatist for a fuller exercise of realism. Shakespeare, let us repeat, was a beginner, unsure of himself; some of his higher dramatic tastes were unformed, and others were suppressed in deference to the popular demand for blood; and no doubt he incorporated not a little from his originals that he might otherwise have rejected; finally I may add that the drama has the praise of Meres (see page 23).

I must now bring forward some of the evidence that goes to prove Shakespeare's authorship; and although to withhold any of this evidence must weaken my case, I will refer the reader to my review of “Pericles,” and quote only one or two examples: “How dangerous It is to jet upon a prince's right” (II. i. 64), will compare with “Richard III,” II. iv. 51. So also I. i. 150-157 may be a forecast of “Macbeth,” III. ii. 19-26.

More noteworthy is the following:

Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee;  
And with thy shame thy father's sorrow dæ,  
(V. iii. 46, 47.)

<sup>1</sup> Interesting enough is the following (IV. i. 42-44): “Boy. Grandsire, 'tis Ovid's Metamorphoses; my mother gave it me. . . .” But though the writer of “Titus Andronicus” was influenced by classic legend and mythology, the main story is probably of eastern origin.

<sup>2</sup> This fact, moreover, accounts for some of the improbabilities in the play, as when the two brothers fall into the pit, etc., etc.

which closely resembles

Live in thy shame, but die not shame with thee;

These words hereafter thy tormenters be.

("Richard II," II. i. 135, 136.)

and I may add that resemblances to "Richard II" are numerous and striking.

I should note that of single words which may be pronounced Shakespearean, there are a large number in the play, but for these I have no space; nor for the likeness of imagery, or for incidents and situations common to other plays. But as regards the characters I may point out that Aaron is related to Richard III and Iago—he is a Moor, moreover: Tamora might claim some kindred with Cleopatra, Titus with King Lear, and so forth. Next we may notice an example of that comic relief, so nearly Shakespearean, in the rustic Clown who comes upon the stage with his basket, and remains stolidly indifferent when horror has reached its highest; we may compare, for example, "Antony and Cleopatra," V. ii. 241-282.

But Shakespeare's most of all are the literary, the exuberant passages which, like the speech of Marcus in II. iv., are excrescent from the normal growth of the drama. Less like Shakespeare are some of the Classicisms and the redundant mythology; but not less like Shakespeare are the foibles, the faults innumerable, the obtrusive imagery, the contemptuous anachronisms, the threefold hyperboles, the conceits, the puns; we have the honey-bees and their master, stones that are "sensible," like those in "Richard II" or Richard III" or like the "coal" in "King John"; we have quotations from the Latin Grammar, as in "Twelfth Night"; and at the close of the play the author comes on the stage in his characteristic manner of farewell. Possibly these suggestions may serve to guide us, if not to convince.

(12) THE COMEDY OF ERRORS, 1591

*Historical Particulars*

As far as we know, "The Comedy of Errors" was first printed in the Folio of 1623. We learn from "Gesta Grayorum" that a "Comedy of Errors" (like to Plautus his "Menaechmi") was acted at Gray's Inn "by the players," on December 28th, 1594; this was probably Shakespeare's play. Also it is mentioned by Meres in 1598 (see p. 22). A passage in the Third Act (III. ii. 125-127): "*Ant. S.* Where France? *Dro. S.* In her forehead; armed and revealed, making war against her heir," refers, without doubt, to the contemporary civil war in France, 1589-1593, in which Elizabeth took part by sending an armed force in the year 1591; "who sent whole armadoes of caracks" (III. ii. 140), may have reference to the Spanish Armada of 1588. Therefore we may give the date of composition as 1591. Some such early date is suggested by the style, versification, and dramatic structure; we have an abundance of rhyme, often in quatrains, and occasionally the fourteen-syllabled couplets of the older comedy; and the drama is compact after the classic model.

Shakespeare based his play on the "Menaechmi" of Plautus; one scene, however (III. i.), was suggested by the "Amphitruo," and the incident may have further suggested the brothers Dromio. He may have seen in MS. a translation of the "Menaechmi" by W. W. (probably William Warner), which was printed in 1595, but he knew enough Latin to make use of the original. There was a play, "The Historie of Error," which was acted at Hampton Court in 1576, and to this he may possibly have been indebted. I may add that the action of the drama is comprised within one day, ending about 5 p.m.

*Critical Remarks*

Though constructed, as I have observed, with much respect for the classic unities,<sup>1</sup> the play is remarkable for the intrusion of romantic elements. Shakespeare is not content with making the farcical structure more complex and more amusing; the poet within him, as ever, and even thus early, outbids the mere dramatist; it refines the coarser figures of the old Latin comedy, and then creates for its romantic purpose such characters as Ægeon and his wife, and Luciana; and yet other characters are introduced—the Duke Solinus, Balthazar, Angelo. Already, therefore, we have an example of that delightful and unflinching characteristic of the Shakespearean drama—romance.

Again, even in a farce, the poet is nothing if not musical, lyrical, beautiful:

O train me not, sweet mermaid, with thy note,  
To drown me in thy sister's flood of tears;  
Sing, siren, for thyself, and I will dote;  
Spread o'er the silver waves thy golden hairs. . . .  
He gains by death that hath such means to die.

This is not the stuff that farces are made of; but these quatrains of Luciana and Antipholus are the very stuff of the music—it is not language—that flows from the lips of Romeo and Juliet when they first tremble to each other.<sup>2</sup>

And with romance we have pathos, as in V. i. 306-318. Here, and in the context, we find many of those elements of Shakespeare's thoughts and utterances which are described so often in these pages; and therefore the bare reference may effect my purpose.

Further, Luciana and Antipholus, here lightly sketched, will re-appear fully painted in "Twelfth Night" as Olivia and

<sup>1</sup> For example, the action is comprised within a single day. That Shakespeare sometimes forgets this is clear from the discrepancies: "This week he hath been heavy" (V. i. 45); "In bed he slept not," etc. (V. i. 63); where a cause which began to operate on that day is referred to a past period.

<sup>2</sup> "Romeo and Juliet," I. v. 95-112.

Sebastian. These, I think, and many others which I may call Shakespearean additions, are the striking features of the piece; yet the mere farce is very cleverly wrought.

(13) THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA, 1592

*Historical Particulars*

As far as can be ascertained, this play was first published in the Folio of 1623, up to which date we have no further record than that of Meres in 1598 (see p. 22). But the subject of the play and its treatment, the style and the verse, are evidence that it belongs to Shakespeare's earlier period, and we may place it somewhere between "Love's Labour's Lost" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream." It is a first essay in sentimental comedy, with little attempt at character drawing; its intrigue is puerile, its construction symmetrical and formal, its dialogue often imitative of Lyly; yet it is a delightful experiment, full of promise, and most successful—like all Shakespeare's early attempts—where it brings low life and nature on the stage. Launce and his dog are the merit of the piece, and the "shadowy desert, unfrequented woods," are a suggestion from Sherwood Forest, which prepares us for the woods of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and are a faint first sketch of the Forest of Arden. Indeed, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" is worth its place among the plays of Shakespeare, if only for what I may call its triumphs of anticipation. I have mentioned Launce, the first of the clowns, who re-appears in "The Merchant of Venice" as Launcelot Gobbo; but Gobbo includes Speed also;<sup>2</sup> and Julia and Lucetta are a first sketch of Portia and Nerissa, as must

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also "Bless thee, Bottom, thou art translated," etc., in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (III. i. 122), with the passage: "This is the fairy land. . . ." (II. ii. 190-205).

<sup>2</sup> Cf., for example, Speed's "Madam Silvia!" and Valentine's "Who bade you call her?" with Launcelot's "Why, Jessica!" and Shylock's "Who bids thee call?"

be evident when we compare the second scene of the first Act in each play; further, the subject of friendship and love, which is crudely treated in the earlier drama, marks a great advance in Shakespeare's ethics when it is rehandled in the "Merchant of Venice." Not less striking is the resemblance between IV. iv. 44-210, and the scenes in "Twelfth Night," where Viola is an unwilling ambassador of love. With Romeo and Juliet the correspondences are more numerous and equally exact, though it is Silvia and not Julia who most resembles Juliet; and this likeness of Silvia in situation and of Julia in name, may account for the confusion in III. i. 81, where Verona is put for Milan. It is likely, therefore, that "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" precedes all these plays, and the date of composition may be assigned to the year 1592; though, like many other plays of Shakespeare's first decade, it may have been revised at a later date.

Even thus early, however, Shakespeare weaves his drama with many threads of contemporary or preceding fiction, and, as I have remarked elsewhere, dramas no longer existing are an important element in most of these creations, notably in "The Merchant of Venice." In writing "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," Shakespeare almost certainly had before him the "Two Italian Gentlemen," which Anthony Munday—possibly *Anthony Dull* in "Love's Labour's Lost"—had translated in 1584. Another translation—used by Shakespeare with the former one when he was writing "A Midsummer Night's Dream"—assisted him here; this is the "Diana" of Montemayor, 1582; and a play founded on this story, "The History of Felix and Philomena," which was acted in 1584, may also have furnished some hints. The intrigues of Proteus at Milan may have been suggested by the "Comoedia von Julio und Hippolyta," which exists in the German version used by the English actors abroad; and the proffered surrender of Silvia (V. iv. 82-86) finds a parallel in the

stories that Shakespeare had read in the "Decameron" of Boccaccio (*e.g.*, "Tito and Gisippo"). Incidents, such as that of the rope ladder, which this play shares with "Romeo and Juliet," must of course be referred to the authorities for that tragedy (Section 16); hints for the forest scene may have been supplied by the "Arcadia" (Section 25); and for Launce and Speed by the clowns Licio and Petulius in Lyly's "Midas" (1589); and, finally, the waxen image figure in II. iv. 201 (though it occurs also in "The Two Italian Gentlemen" mentioned above), may have been transferred from Giordano Bruno's "Candelajo," 1582, one of the most popular among the Italian stories that helped to lay the foundation of the Elizabethan drama. We may add—what is true of all Shakespeare's plays—the scenery is essentially English; and, though the writer may have travelled, he ignores details of accuracy, and sends his two gentlemen from Verona to Milan by the tidal river (II. iii. 58), that he watched from old London Bridge. Nevertheless, means of water communication unknown to us may have existed in those days, and Shakespeare's geography may often be defended where it seems most at fault.

The action is represented in seven days, which may be distributed as follows: 1st day, I. i. ii.; interval, a month or sixteen months. 2nd day, I. iii.; II. i.; 3rd, II. i. ii.; interval, Proteus's journey to Milan. 4th day, II. iv. v.; interval of a few days. 5th day, II. vi. vii., III., IV. i.; interval, including Julia's journey to Milan. 6th day, IV. ii. 7th, IV. iii. iv., V.

### *Critical Remarks*

The title supplies us with the main motive: "Two Gentlemen"—"my loving Proteus," "Sweet Valentine." And as to the other motive, "By love the young and tender wit Is turned to folly;" (I. i. 47-48).

Tennyson's remark concerning Bacon, "How could a man with such an idea of Love write 'Romeo and Juliet'?"



is misleading; both Bacon and Shakespeare set out on their career as authors with conventional notions of friendship and love; it could not be otherwise; we have such notions in this play, and we have them in Bacon's work of this date; but as I point out in the next chapter, the moral development of these two great thinkers was totally different; drama, poetry, and the pursuit of the ideal at once guided Shakespeare, and led him on till he created the "love of Ferdinand and Miranda, a love so astonishingly unconventional that the speech of the lovers, like their lives, is purged even of the coarseness that clings to the best of humankind so long as they wear this muddy vesture of decay,<sup>1</sup> and a love so far surpassing friendship that another world than ours is created to do it a consistent honour. But Bacon pursued the intellectual path to the end of it; science to him, as to many another, was "like the sun which reveals the face of earth, but seals and shuts up the face of heaven"; he could never look up; "his eyes were downward bent," and blinded to what Milton calls "the vision beatific."

I have said so much by way of caution; readers of this play who may be shocked by the crudeness of its sentiments, especially in the fifth Act, must look forward with confidence to Shakespeare's moral development. It will be rapid enough.<sup>2</sup> In a play written soon after—not more, as I think, than three or four years—viz., "All's Well that Ends Well," they will read, "Keep thy friend under thy own life's key"; but they will also read "Love is holy." Here the balance is more equal. And when they reach "The Tempest," they will be surprised to discover that the part played by Love in their recollections of Shakespeare is so important, that friendship, as a motive, is almost lost sight of.

<sup>1</sup> See also review of "Romeo and Juliet," Section 16.

<sup>2</sup> Even in this play they will find the usual preliminary antitheta (see p. 30), e.g.: "In love, Who respect friend" (V. iv. 53, 54).

But as regards the fifth act of this drama, we may reasonably suppose that it is both hastily written and imperfect. Nothing can be more grotesque than the incongruity of the Duke's remarks, "The more degenerate and base," etc. (V. iv. 136-139), and the degenerate and base abandonment of Silvia (V. iv. 78-86). We have also in this passage an application of the doctrine of repentance that is yet more preposterous than the one which will be found at the close of "Measure for Measure" (Section 30).

Turning now from the thought of the play to its form, we are struck with what Shakespeare himself has described as "the even road of a blank verse"; we have such verse at intervals in others of the early plays, for instance, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream": but in this play alone is it consistently maintained from start to finish; it is the blank verse which is "end stopt," in which the accents fall evenly, and the syllables are definite in number. Of course it is occasionally varied by couplets, and by quatrains and other forms of verse for which Shakespeare may have found a precedent in the play of "The Two Italian Gentlemen" mentioned in the former section.

#### (14) KING RICHARD II, 1594

##### *Historical Particulars*

No less than four Quarto editions of "Richard II" preceded its publication in the Folio of 1623. The first of these—a very rare volume—has the following title-page: "The Tragedie of King Richard the second, *As it hath beene publikely acted by the right Honourable the Lorde Chamberlaine his Servants.* . . . 1597."

To the title-page of the Quarto of 1598, Shakespeare's name is appended. Both these Quartos omit the Deposition scene (IV. i. 154-318), which appears for the first time in the Third Quarto of 1608; and on the title-pages of some of these Quarto copies we find the words, "With new additions of the Parliament Sceane, and the deposing

of King Richard." This edition was reproduced with trifling alterations in 1615; indeed, each copy of these Quartos seems based upon its predecessor. The Folio text, again, is based on this 1615 Quarto, aided, perhaps, by a stage-copy of the play. Of these six editions, the Folio may be regarded as the best authority for the additions mentioned above, and the First Quarto for the rest of the play.

These "new additions" of the Third Quarto are in reality old omissions from the two preceding texts, and doubtless formed part of the original MS. This Deposition Scene is an integral portion of the Fourth Act, referred to in the words of the Abbot, "A woeful pageant have we here beheld" (IV. i. 321), and it takes its place naturally in the scene, and corresponds with the style of the whole play. The cause of its omission from the Quartos of 1597 and 1598 is found in contemporary events; in 1596 the Pope had issued a Bull inciting Elizabeth's subjects to rebellion, and any suggestion of deposition would be resented by a queen who was wont to compare her fortunes with those of Richard II. "I am Richard II; know ye not that?" was her exclamation (August 4th, 1601) on looking into William Lambard's "*Pandecta Rotulorum*" where she came upon the records of the reign of the unfortunate King, and she added, "this tragedie" (probably Shakespeare's) "was played forty times in open streets and houses." Again, Sir John Hayward's historical work of 1599 included a description of Richard's deposition, and the enemies of Essex persuaded the queen that the author was "hinting at what might befall her in the future:" and Hayward in consequence was imprisoned till 1601. Again, when Essex in 1601 attempted insurrection, Sir Gilly Meyrick and others of his friends contrived a performance of "the play of deposing King Richard the Second." These causes for omitting the Deposition scene were removed by the Queen's death, in 1603, and it was restored to its place in the Quarto of 1608.

It has long been a question whether the play acted before

Meyrick and his friends was Shakespeare's "Richard II." According to the evidence of the actor Augustine Phillips, who arranged the performance, "the play of the deposing and killing of King Richard the Second" was "so old and so long out of use ('*exoletam tragoediam*,' Camden), that they should have small or no company at it."<sup>1</sup> We may presume that Phillips refers to the play, not by its title, but by some popular descriptive phrase, which may or may not apply to Shakespeare's drama; moreover Meyrick calls it "the play of King Harry the IVth," and Bacon "the story of Henry IV," though the latter elsewhere uses the descriptive title of Phillips. Nor does Shakespeare's play, from our point of view, adapt itself readily to the purpose of Meyrick and his associates;<sup>2</sup> in those days, however, it may have been otherwise.

Whether this was Shakespeare's play or not, it is certain that the performance witnessed at the Globe by Dr. Simon Forman,<sup>3</sup> April 30th, 1611, was not that of Shakespeare's "Richard II," for it dealt only with the earlier events of the reign; and it has been suggested that this play and the one mentioned in the former paragraph may have been the first and second parts of some old chronicle play of the reign of Richard II.

Yet another play on this subject, "The Tragedy of Richard II, concluding with the murder of the Duke of Gloucester," may be found among the MSS. in the British

<sup>1</sup> The performance would probably take place at the Globe Theatre, with which both Phillips and Shakespeare were associated. Forty shillings extra were paid to Phillips and his fellow players for their services.

<sup>2</sup> The Bishop of Carlisle's speech (IV. i. 114-149) condemned deposition; see also V. i. 49, 50. Further, the deposition scene is a comparatively small part of Shakespeare's "Richard II." Note also that Shakespeare's play would hardly be "old and long out of use"; its popularity was attested by publication in 1597 and again in 1598. Still, it is a significant fact that the deposition scene should have been removed at all.

<sup>3</sup> Forman was a quack and an astrologer; his manuscript "Book of Plaies and Notes thereof" (Ashmelean MSS. 208) gives some account of "Cymbeline," "The Winter's Tale," "Macbeth," and "Richard II."

Museum (Egerton MSS., 1894, printed 1870). It is probably of much later date than Shakespeare's "Richard II," to which it bears a general resemblance.

As to the date of Shakespeare's play, we have no direct evidence, but it may be placed between "Richard III" and "King John," and it should have been composed about three years before its first publication in 1597; and it is mentioned by Meres (see p. 22). It is clearly indebted to Marlowe's "Edward II," which was written in 1590 and published in 1594. Further, it seems to have been drawn upon by Daniel in the second edition of "The History of the Civil Wars," 1595, and these parallel passages are not found in the first edition of Daniel's poem, which was published earlier in the same year. Altogether we may assign it to the year 1593-94, a date which is in accordance with the general style of the drama. This general style has notable peculiarities; like the over subtle character of the leading figure of the play, it has contrasts too strongly marked to secure artistic unity, or perhaps our approbation. Richard III was a "plain devil," and consistently played his part in Marlowesque blank verse; but Richard II is something more than a reflection of that poet's Edward II, and his speech is not always the speech of Marlowe; more often we hear the lyric language of Greene. In other words, the play opens with admirable and appropriate blank verse, but soon lapses into rhyme; it is a play of metrical and poetical experiments, not always successful, including couplet, quatrain, sestet, "stichomythia," but no prose; experiments in quibbles, hyperboles, conceits; in imagery exuberant and sometimes picturesque, but more often incongruous, over-fanciful, laboured, and tiresome. In many of these qualities the style comes nearest to "A Midsummer Night's Dream," but there it is at least in keeping with the subject and the atmosphere. The same may be said of "Love's Labour's Lost" and "Romeo and Juliet." In "Richard II" the

poet casts about him for a style, and spoils his work; it becomes almost burlesque. In "A Midsummer Night's Dream," on the other hand, though full of apologies, he secures a delightful effect without reminding us that his touch is at times unsure, and his taste not wholly formed. But of the date and style of the play something further will be said in Chapter VIII.

For what may be called the raw material of his play, Shakespeare used the second edition<sup>1</sup> (1586-1587) of Holinshed's "Cronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland." Some details, such as Norfolk's going to the Holy Land (IV. i. 92-95) may have been derived from Stowe's "Annals" (1580). Yet others, such as Richard's resigning the crown to Bolingbroke in IV. i. 181-189, may have been suggested by Berners' "Froissart" (1525).

But for the most important antecedents of the play, especially the artistic, we look elsewhere; and, as far as I know, the fact has not hitherto been noticed. The outline sketch of Richard II as well as that of Richard III appears unmistakably in "Henry VI." I will first call attention to passages in the earlier play (see Section 8) that recur in "Richard II"; but of course I attach the least importance to such parallels; it is the dramatic antecedents of the play that are profoundly interesting. First we have in "Henry VI" a far clearer outline sketch of the character of Richard II than is to be found even in Marlowe's "Edward II"; I refer to "base, fearful, and despairing" Henry himself ("3 Henry VI," I. i. 178). He is undoubtedly Shakespeare's first essay in the curious and complex study that resulted in "Richard II," of which character Mr. Swinburne ("Harper," March, 1903) remarks, that a student may wonder Shakespeare had the patience to persist in its development. "Base, fearful, and

<sup>1</sup> The withering of the bay trees omen (II. iv. 8) is not found in the first edition, 1577; and in "Richard III" (V. iii. 324) Shakespeare seems to have copied a mistake which occurs in the second edition.

despairing Henry"; more than once he is thus described in the threefold play, and if we look for the tragedy of both king and people, which was re-enacted in "Richard II," we find it thus: "Come wife, let's in, and learn to govern better; For yet may England curse my wretched reign ("2 Henry VI," IV. ix. 48-49; cf. with "Richard II," V. i. 24-25).

But now for suggestions of incident, situation, manner; take the speeches of characteristic sentimentality, effusiveness, fine phrases, fantastic imagery, affectation, pose; the fifty-four lines of "3 Henry VI," II. v. 1-54<sup>1</sup> are a perfect exemplar of Richard's sixty-six lines in "Richard II," V. v. 1-66; the false sentiment of Henry, where he addresses the land he has done his best to ruin ("3 Henry VI," III. i. 12-21), is repeated almost to the letter by Richard in III. ii. 4-26 of the later play; or again, the fantastic realism of the feather in "3 Henry VI," III. i. 82-93 is the forerunner of the looking-glass episode in "Richard II," IV. i. 275-599; and these examples may be multiplied indefinitely. Taken singly they may not be striking, but in the mass they are quite convincing.

I have spoken of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Marlowe's "Edward II." The likeness extends beyond character and incident even to minor details. But of these I give some examples in Chapter VIII.

As to the time of this play, fourteen days are represented on the stage, with intervals.

### *Critical Remarks*

I think that of all the works of Shakespeare, I like "Richard II" the least. This low estimate may be due to the unredeemed selfishness and weakness of the leading character, which seems to saturate the whole play. We

<sup>1</sup> It is important to notice that this soliloquy finds no place in "The Second Part of the Contention"; and this is true of many others among the similar utterances of the king (e.g., "3 Henry VI," IV. viii. 37-50, "That's not . . . follow him").

have the weakest of scenes, situations, characters, incidents; and of the style I have spoken already.

To descend to particulars; here is a couplet—perhaps the most unfortunate tag in all Shakespeare:

Désolate, desolate, must I hence and die,  
The last leave of thee takes my weeping eye.

It seems strange that Shakespeare at any stage of his career should write like this, even when he rhymes. The first line is bad; but in regard to bathos and inefficacy the second is worse. It is not surprising that Shakespeare should have mentally fashioned such a line; we all lapse in our rudimentary thought now and then; it is not surprising that he should have written it down; we often give a doubtful line the benefit of our pen; but that he did not cross it utterly out—that is surely hard to explain. Yet this is only one of many—far too many such in the play; and as to the conceits and quibbles, they sometimes threaten to choke the sickly stream of drama.

Or take a whole speech, such as II. ii. 34-40. The usual attempts made to defend this kind of language are examined in Chapter VIII, where I refer to another and totally different speech by the same character (V. i. 26-34).

Shall we say that Shakespeare in this mood of experiment wished to show us how badly he could write, and then how excellently? But let us turn to another subject, the characterization; here are the same extremes. To begin with, Richard is over-idealized, and for this reason; Henry VI and Marlowe's Edward II were founded on fact; the ideal complexities of their characters are kept in bounds by their relation to the reality. No such restrictions were placed upon Shakespeare when he was working at Richard II, unless we accept those of popular tradition (see, for example, note 1, page 151), to which he was often subservient; and thus he merely re-creates the ideal personality of his own Henry VI and Marlowe's king, and carries yet further the idealizing process, till we get some-



thing dangerously like a caricature. And among the curious phenomena to which this mode of treatment gives rise, not the least striking is the fact that Shakespeare's Richard II is much more like the Edward II or even the Henry VI of actual history.

Next, no commentator, I think, has noticed the serious flaw in the development of this second and over complex Richard; this is the more strange, because Shakespeare not only noticed it himself, but also tried hard to redeem it by elaborate apologies; in fact, as I hinted above, the experimental extremes that disfigure or ruin the style of the play are equally destructive to the characterization. A king comes on the stage; he is selfish, crafty, weak, cruel (I. iv. 64, 99), contemptible, frivolous, heartless, unscrupulous, impolitic; and many of these qualities, as is clear from overwhelming evidence, have belonged to him from his youth up. Richard III, we say, could win the love of woman. Few women resist strength; but this mean weakling could have the love of neither woman nor man.<sup>1</sup> But now a queen enters; she must have had long and bitter knowledge of all these faults; for instance, she was present during II. i. 69-223;<sup>2</sup> yet she speaks of the king as "my sweet Richard." This is revolting; seldom indeed does Shakespeare so grievously insult our sense of propriety. That he feels this himself is evident from his after attempts to explain that Richard both in shape and mind is "transformed" (V. i. 26, 27); he is a fair rose wither'd; he is the model where old Troy did stand; he is King Richard's tomb, and not King Richard; and so on. Now,

<sup>1</sup> The groom episode (V. v. 67-97) as I regard it, testifies rather to the beginner; it is surely an intrusive, a forced incident, and not a natural "set-off." It is something akin to the pity of Coriolanus that ended with a "By Jove, forgot!"

<sup>2</sup> That is, while her husband is proved to have been a despicable villain from the first, and while he spares no pains to prove himself such a villain still—worthy in no slight measure of Mr. Swinburne's "contempt and hatred . . . loathing and abhorrence."

Shakespeare is rather fond of this expedient of "transforming"; he unwarrantably transforms (using the word) Hamlet, Henry V, and others. But, as I have said, these elaborate excuses serve merely to prove that Shakespeare recognized his own error, and that he made strenuous yet useless efforts to redeem it.

Nothing, indeed, could be further from the truth than this theory of transformation. As a fact, if any change has come over Richard, it is for the better:

Our holy lives must win a new world's crown,  
Which our profane hours here have stricken down;  
(V. i. 24, 25.)

Such are his words to the Queen after his deposition. Stript of the externals of majesty which he had disgraced, he is at least a man; and he grows greater towards the end, till in death he performs the first kingly act of his life—"Villain, thy own hand yields thy death's instrument." (V. v. 106.)

One other reason for this overdrawn King of words and phrases, maudlin sentiments, inert actions, contradictions, is found in the fact that Shakespeare wished to effect the utmost possible contrast between him and Bolingbroke. Later the poet becomes more expert in this device of foil or moral antithesis, and his contrasts do no such violence to real or artistic truth.<sup>1</sup> Another reason, but on this I lay no stress, may lie in the poet's unconscious moral purpose, to show even the folly of Kings its own feature, and by idealizing the tragedy that underlies nine-tenths of history, to effect Aristotle's purpose of purifying our emotions. With this and other intents he deviates at will from the strict historic paths. The queen should be a child of twelve; Gaunt, the aged patriot, should be a middle-aged schemer, and so forth; but for these details we have no

<sup>1</sup> Another reason is his deference to the tradition: "Richard, that sweet lovely rose" ("1 Hen. IV," I. iii. 175, with which compare "Richard II," V. i. 8); and Shakespeare could not afford—or so he imagined—to omit so much of dramatic opportunity.

space, nor is their enumeration important for our artistic purpose. So, too, with the historic events and their relation to the play.

And now to continue with the characters. The Queen is another impossible personage, impossible because she was created to give scope and play to impossible attributes in her husband. "To be wise and love exceeds man's might," is one of Shakespeare's Baconian and distorted but variable and ultimately reformed views of the wisest of all passions (see p. 142, and Ch. VII); and naturally his king of false sentiments and futile phrases must make ridiculous parade of this emotion also.

But equally, as I conjecture, the Queen was created to be an early example of another device of the dramatist (Section 27), for she plays the part assigned to a woman in several of the tragedies; she appears, that is, as the feminine counterpart of the leading male personage; she speaks her husband's language, and like him (unless we except V. i. 26-34), fondles her emotions. This all-important characteristic of both Richard and the Queen is admirably expressed in "King John," III. iv. 92: "You are as fond of grief as of your child."

Of other characters in the play I shall speak more briefly. Bolingbroke is powerfully sketched by the pencil of mere antithesis; he is the man of intellect, common sense, action, as opposed to the weakling of emotions, fancies, words; in fact, as so often in early Shakespeare, the antithesis is somewhat crude and forced; the poet is over-anxious to make his King of mere sentiment a foil to both Richard III and Bolingbroke. Hence partly, as I may repeat, the more grotesque features of the character of Richard II.

Next in importance is Gaunt. Now, as I pointed out in Chapter IV, characters that deliver speeches which are sententious rather than literary, excrescent rather than a normal dramatic growth are, more or less, Shakespeare

himself—the man within the artist, the poet within the dramatist; such a character is Gaunt in this play. Further, he stands for England; and he will appear again in “King John” as Faulconbridge, and in the later historical plays as Henry V.

With regard to the minor dramatic figures, Norfolk, we may say, was necessary to the tournament scenes, and was favourably painted in order that Richard might seem yet more wantonly despotic:

A dearer merit, not so deep a main . . .  
Have I deserved at your Highness' hands.

As to York, he seems to play many parts, none of them well defined; the poet had some purpose in making him, like Gaunt, old; both embody the tradition of a nobler past, and perhaps we miss Gaunt less since York remains. But further, these two, Gaunt with his “age and sullens,” and his wise saws, and York in his feeble, fussy dotage, stand together for a character too popular on that early stage—a weak, moralizing old man; and their direct descendant is Polonius.

“The worst scene of all,” says Mr. Swinburne, “in which York pleads with Bolingbroke for the death of his son.” But the fact is that Shakespeare is beginning to sketch his full-length portrait of Henry V, and he devotes this undue space to the treason of young Aumerle and its pardon, in order that by comparison the faults of Henry's youth may seem not only trifling, but almost virtues:

As dissolute as desperate; yet through both  
I see some sparks of better hope, which elder years  
May happily bring forth.

Of “Richard II” as a tragedy some particulars will be given in Chapter VIII, as also some points of comparison with Marlowe. I may add that while Marlowe, in his play of “Edward II,” has sketched a more consistent character, Shakespeare in his “Richard II” has given to the world a greater drama.

## (15) A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, 1594

*Historical Particulars*

Few of Shakespeare's plays derive material from so many sources, and few are so entirely the creation of the author. Moreover, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" we find examples of those rare references to contemporary events that help us to determine the date of composition. The wet season of 1594 is the subject of one of these remarkable passages in the play (II. i. 81-114) which I have elsewhere (p. 33) described as excrescent from the true dramatic growth. Among other contemporary allusions to the phenomenally cold and wet summer of 1594 are those which we find in the Diary of Dr. Simon Forman (p. 145), in Stowe's "Chronicle," in Dr. King's "Lectures upon Jonas" (1594), and in the poem "Charitie" by Churchyard (1595). The passage in which Shakespeare describes the wet season can hardly be a later interpolation, and it has all the appearance of being written while the occurrence was fresh in the memory of both dramatist and audience; 1594 is therefore at least an approximate date for the composition of the drama, which, however, was subject to revision any time before its publication in 1600. It is mentioned by Meres (p. 22), and was therefore acted before 1599. There may be other topical allusions in the play, but compared with the former item they must be regarded as indefinite; I may, however, mention two or three of these supposed references to contemporary events. The first will be found in the well-known lines (V. 52, 53)

The thrice three Muses mourning for the death  
Of learning, late deceased in beggary.

If these lines have any direct reference, it may be to the death of Greene (1592), or to Spenser's "Teares of the Muses," 1591, or very possibly to both: Spenser himself

died in comparative poverty in 1599, but it is unlikely that Shakespeare made such a late interpolation as this date implies. Next, the Queen herself figures in this as in no other of Shakespeare's plays; She is the "fair vestal throned by the west"<sup>1</sup> (II. i. 158), "the imperial votaress" of II. i. 163, who passed on, *i.e.*, from Kenilworth and from the Earl of Leicester, "In maiden meditation fancy-free";<sup>2</sup> but it may be doubted whether, as Warburton supposed, other notable personages appear in the context."<sup>3</sup> Yet it is extremely probable that Shakespeare had in mind some festivities that took place at Kenilworth Castle in 1575, which, as a boy of eleven, he may himself have witnessed. These included a pageant on the lake, where Triton appeared borne by a swimming mermaid, and bade the waters be still; and Arion<sup>4</sup> was there "riding aloft upon his old friend the Dolphin," and singing "a delectable ditty of a song"; and

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, Western Europe or Great Britain; cf. with "western flower" in II. i. 166.

<sup>2</sup> That is, free from the power of love, and lost in contemplation partly religious ("Richard III," III. vii. 62; see also "maiden pilgrimage" in I. i. 75, of this play); and partly of "virginity" ("All's Well that Ends Well," I. i. 121).

<sup>3</sup> Mary Queen of Scots is the Mermaid, the Dauphin of France is the Dolphin, the rude sea "civil" is Scotland sea-girt and under Mary, and the certain stars the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland who died in her cause, and the Duke of Norfolk who shot madly from his sphere to claim her hand in marriage. (From Warburton's interpretation.)

<sup>4</sup> This performance is referred to again in III. i. 38-60, and the following extract from "Merry Passages and Jeasts," by Sir Nicholas L'Estrange (Harl. MS. 6395, fol. 36b), has a very important bearing on the play: "Finding his voice to be very hoarse and vnpleasant . . . he teares of his Disguise, and sweares he was none of Arion, not he, but eene honest Har. Goldingham." This we compare with III. i. 38-50, a passage that seems also to include a reminiscence of the following incident; at the Scottish Court, on the occasion of the baptism of Prince Henry, eldest son of James I, in August, 1594, "while the king and queen were at dinner, a chariot was drawn in by 'a black-moore. This chariot should have been drawne by a lyon, but because his presence might have brought some feare to the nearest . . . it was thought meete that the Moore should supply that room.'"—*Malone*.

the "promontory"<sup>1</sup> may have been the rising ground on which the spectators were assembled. Another evening a display of fireworks "*stars coruscant*,"<sup>2</sup> was given near the lake; and these are the "stars" of the passage. Still, when we remember Shakespeare's habit and practice of "double entendre," and of rapid change from figure to fact, we may well believe that "Cupid"<sup>3</sup> is Leicester,<sup>4</sup> and the "little western flower"<sup>5</sup> (*laetitia*—"heartsease"?), the Countess of Essex, whom he afterwards married. We may further notice that the introduction of the "mermaid" incident, which has no place whatever in the legend of the flower, is another proof that the context is dragged in to do homage to Elizabeth.

Other suggestions of date are supplied by the following, all of which are referred to in the play: Chute's "*Cephalus and Procris*," 1593; Marlowe's "*Hero and Leander*," 1593; Marlowe and Nash's "*Dido*," 1594.

Akin to this subject of contemporary allusion and compliment is the conjecture that the whole play, like "*The Tempest*"—which in a measure it resembles—may have

<sup>1</sup> Otherwise "promontory" is necessary to introduce "mermaid."

<sup>2</sup> Thus described by Robert Laneham in a letter to a friend.

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note how often Shakespeare's extra-dramatic passages involve difficulties; Cupid is between the moon and the earth; his shaft is aimed at the "vestal by the west"; it is quenched in the beams of the moon; and thereafter falls on a "little western flower." All this comes of Leicester and Elizabeth; the chaste moon is opposed to some earthly love; then it becomes necessary to identify the "moon" with the "vestal," etc.

<sup>4</sup> He takes a "certain" aim, as opposed to "beguiled" in I. i. 239, and because Leicester came nearer to the heart of Elizabeth than any other of her suitors.

<sup>5</sup> The "milk-white" to "purple" myth he took from the Pyramus and Thisbe story in his *Ovid* ("*Metamorphoses*," IV. 55-136). It is quite in Shakespeare's manner to lead up through allegory to reality—or, rather, as here, to allegory. Further, the flower is merely like Ovid's mulberry, one of the "species" whose origin Shakespeare has poetically described. In Ovid the mulberry, at first "white as snow," turns "a deepe darke purple colour" (Golding's Translation, 1565). Also we may compare Puck's mission with Ariel's—"to fetch dew from the still-vexed Bermoothes" ("*The Tempest*," I. ii. 227-229).

been written to grace the wedding of some exalted personage, most probably of the Earl of Derby, January 26th, 1595, also of the Earl of Bedford at about the same time; yet as in the case of "The Tempest," so here, it is pleasanter to think that such a supreme work of art, though akin to the masque, had some higher motive; but of course both plays might have been acted on the occasion of wedding festivities, as indeed "The Tempest" was. More probably, and this also applies to "Twelfth Night" and "The Winter's Tale," the play is dedicated to a festival or some popular occasion; like Jonson's Masque, "The Satyr," shall we say, it was written for performance "on Midsummer day at night." Midsummer day, the festival of St. John, was a day of popular observance, when pageants were performed and plays acted; and on Midsummer night witches and goblins were abroad, and worked their wiles.<sup>1</sup>

Although the date of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is best determined by the foregoing topical allusions, I am disposed to regard some of the finer passages as later interpolations. On the other hand, the style should place it among Shakespeare's earlier productions; likewise the thought has closest affinities with the dramas of his first or tentative period. Resemblances occur even in "Henry VI"; we may compare, for example, "3 Henry VI," V. vi. 11, 12, with V. i. 21, 22, in the later play. It may be added that "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is one of the plays mentioned by Meres (p. 22).

Passing on now to the sources of the play—or rather to the hints in previous literature that add to if they do not borrow their immortality from association with this marvel

<sup>1</sup> Little weight attaches to the opinion that these "visions" (Epilogue) are appropriate to the period of "Midsummer madness." As a fact, Shakespeare chose Midsummer Night to suit the fairy element in his play, and May Day was suggested by Chaucer ("Knight's Tale"). In such a Dream the two are not incongruous.



of music and vision—we first trace the legend of Theseus and Hippolyta to Plutarch's "Life of Theseus," whence also the poet took the names Egeus (the form used by Chaucer in Legend of Ariadne; more correctly Ægeus), Ægle, Perigenia (Perigouna), Ariadne, Antiopa; there also we find the original of II. i. 78-80. But the legend—or part of it—he read also in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," where he found the name "Philostrate," together with suggestions for the woods near Athens, the hunt on May morning and the conquest of Thebes (V. 51).

He derived the Pyramus and Thisbe myth from his favourite Ovid (IV. 55-166), and though he also consulted the Latin, as occasion required, he followed Arthur Golding's version with his usual faithfulness. He may also have read Chaucer's Legend of Thisbe of Babylon. Further, in Clement Robinson's "A Handefull of Pleasant Delites," 1584, he found "A New Sonet of Pyramus and Thisbe," whose excessive alliteration he probably parodied (see next Division of this Section); and as the story was frequent and popular, his burlesque would be keenly appreciated. This interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe reminds us of the nine worthies and their entertainers in "Love's Labour's Lost," and both reflect the ruder drama of the time.

The story of the two pairs of lovers and their perplexities was probably suggested to Shakespeare by Munday's "Two Italian Gentlemen" (see Review of "Two Gentlemen of Verona"); and the magic love-juice which "leads an errant passion home again," is a very ancient tradition. Shakespeare may have been indebted to its use in the Spanish Romance, "Diana," by George Montemayor (1579), where the incidents have some resemblance to Shakespeare's. This romance was rendered into English by Yong in 1582 (though he did not publish his translation till 1598); but Shakespeare must have had access to it, possibly by means of a French version before this

date, as he seems to have drawn upon it when writing his "Two Gentlemen of Verona." Moreover, resemblances to "Diana" occur also in "The History of Felix and Philomena" (acted 1584), and in other writings of the period.

The supernatural beings in the play may be roughly divided into the fairies of romantic and other literature, and the elves of popular superstition; but Shakespeare, like Chaucer, removes this distinction; we may compare "Faery Elves," in "Paradise Lost" (l. 781). Puck, however, "a spirit of another sort," remains on the popular side. In "The Tempest" the poet takes a yet wider view, for Ariel's complex ancestry includes not only the elf and the fairy, but also the classic faun, satyr, and divinity, the Hebrew spirit, and the mediæval demon. Hence also Ariel and his meaner ministers are but the servants of a magician; here the elfin crew play their pranks—popular or literary—at their will.

The Fairy King Oberon (Alberich, Elberich, Elferich, Alberon, Auberon, *i.e.*, *elf-King*), is of eastern origin, and came to England from Germany through France. He figures in the old romance of Huon de Bordeaux, which was translated by Lord Berners about 1534. This translation (reprinted 1570) was probably known to Shakespeare, for it seems to have given him a suggestion for the "griffin" of II. i. 232, and the "fearful wild-fowl" of III. i. 33 (thus: "Huon beheld him [the gryffon] and sawe howe he was a crewell fowle. His becke was maruaylously grete," etc.); and further, he may have used a drama, now lost, which appears to have been founded on "Huon de Bordeaux"; for we read in Henslowe's "Diary" of a play, "hewen of burdokes," which was performed in December, 1593, and January, 1593-4. We may add that in R. Greene's "James IV," written about 1589, printed 1598, Oberon appears as "Oboram King of Fayeries," and is attended by a fairy train.

As to the Fairy Queen,<sup>1</sup> we read in King James's "Demonologie," edition 1603, first published 1597, "that fourth kinde of spiritis quihilk be the Gentilis was called Diana, and her wandering Court, and amongs us called the *Phairie*." This association of the fairies with the classic Diana and her nymphs is maintained by Shakespeare in so far as he adopts the name Titania for his fairy queen: "Titania . . . comitum turba stipata suarum" (*i.e.* Diana surrounded by the crowd of her attendants, her "wandering court").

The word Puck, originally demon, spirit, fairy,<sup>2</sup> is used as a proper name by Shakespeare.<sup>3</sup> For the pranks of Puck or Robin Goodfellow, Shakespeare may have been most indebted to Reginald Scot's "Discoverie of Witchcraft," 1584. Robin Goodfellow (*Knecht Ruprecht*) was well known in German and English mythology. He also appears as "Hob-Goblin," *i.e.*, Robin Goblin. It is interesting to note how the country-folk apply to spirits the familiar names of their limited vocabulary; thus we have Jack o'Lantern (the spirit who bears a lantern), and Will o' the Wisp (Will with the wisp of straw on fire); and with this particular spirit of the "villagers," Puck is sometimes and most appropriately identified, as for instance where (II. i. 39) he is said to "Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm"; with this we may compare "The Robin Goodfellowes . . . led poor travellers out of their way notoriously" (Nash, "Terrors of the Night," 1594); *c.f.* also "Poake-ledden" (*i.e.*, "Pixy-led") in footnote 3.

It may be added that the "Colloquia" of Erasmus,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the fairy queen in "Merry Wives of Windsor"; also Queen Mab.

<sup>2</sup> Ovid, "Metamorphoses," iii. 173, 186. It may be noted that Shakespeare took the name "Titania" from the Latin, since Golding always renders it "Diana."

<sup>3</sup> Icelandic, Puki—Old German, Putz—Irish, pooca—Welsh, pwcca—Danish, Puk—Dutch, spook—Scotch, pauky—Old English, Pouke, Pixie; *cf.* "Poake-ledden (Worcestershire), pouk-laden (Shropshire).

<sup>4</sup> Also by Drayton in his "Nymphidia."

from which Shakespeare has taken hints in other plays, supplied him, doubtless, with the figure of the "rose distill'd" in II. i. 75.

Some particulars may now be given of the publication of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The following entry appeared on the Register of the Stationers' Company, October 8th, 1600, "Thomas Ffyssher . . . A booke called A mydsommer nightes Dreame."

In the course of the same year two quarto editions of the play were published. The title-page of one reads thus: "A Midsommer nights dreame. As it hath beene sundry times publickely acted, by the Right honourable, the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants. Written by William Shakespeare [A device of a halcyon, with the motto "Motos soleo componere fluctus"]. Imprinted at London, for Thomas Fisher, and are to be sould at his shoppe, at the Signe of the White Hart in Fleetestreete. 1600."

The title-page of the other is as follows: "A Midsommer night's dreame. As it hath beene sundry times publickely acted, by the Right honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his servants. Written by William Shakespeare. Printed by James Roberts. 1600."

For reasons too numerous to mention here, we may regard that published by Fisher as the first to appear. When Roberts printed, he seems to have had Fisher's copy before him, and to have introduced slight improvements—in spelling and punctuation, for instance, and additional stage directions.

The First Folio edition was printed from Roberts' Quarto with but few alterations; but the Folio of 1632 while reprinting the former corrects some of its errors, adding conjectural emendations that are often uncalled for.

Fisher's Quarto is regarded as the most reliable version of the play; it is not, however, altogether trustworthy, and

a good text must be based on a collation of all these three copies.

The time element is: 1st day, I. ; 2nd day, II. III., and part of IV. i ; 3rd day, IV. i. (part), ii., V.

### *Critical Remarks*

Like the sources—petty enough surely—of its poetic inspiration, so the dramatic elements of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” are more than usually manifold. No less than four streams of story flow through these glades of summer and fairyland, sometimes uniting, sometimes apart, till they mingle for ever as they pour their tribute into the great ocean of truth and beauty. We have the story of the nuptials of Theseus and Hippolyta. This may be called the main stream—though the point is a doubtful one; then there is the interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe, with all that leads up to its performance; next, the fortunes of the two pairs of lovers, the stream of true love that never yet ran smooth; and, touching these here and there,<sup>1</sup> the troubled currents of the quarrel between the Fairy King and Queen; and we may add that the three latter never lose sight of the first.

Otherwise we may find the poet’s main motive in the fairy element, and the influence it is made to exert on two extremes of human society; these extremes, moreover, are introduced to us separately in Act I, and at length, in Act V, when the fairy element has been withdrawn, they are admirably united by the “tragical mirth” of Pyramus and Thisbe.

Another feature of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” is the incongruity of the materials that are so perfectly fused by the poet’s art; we have ancient classic myth, demi-god and Amazon, grave citizens with some show of respect for the laws of Athens; then lads, and lasses, and rude mechanicals with yet smaller right to Athenian citizenship,

<sup>1</sup> Especially in the incident of the love juice.

for they are the sport at one and the same time of mediæval fairies, and of elves and goblins of the English countryside.

And if any complain that these incongruous elements are not happily blended by the principles of art and the laws of waking life, let him turn to the title, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*"; Tennyson's, "*The Princess, A Medley*," fails because art does not recognize medleys; but we can have, as in this play, the artistic presentment of a dream;<sup>1</sup> and of this we are reminded more than once by the poet himself.<sup>2</sup> So in "*Henry V*" Shakespeare insists upon the device of a chorus as a legitimate additional link to his five episodes.

Like that play, moreover, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" is poem as much as drama; indeed, it has some of the features of a masque with its internal travesty, the anti-masque; therefore we have little to say about plot or character. There is the usual parodying of one set of incidents by another of lower scale—the device of heightening, illustrating, or relieving by contrast, which Shakespeare applies so abundantly not to incident alone, but to character, doctrine, thought, and mere language. We have the clowns and their grotesque doings as a set-off against the fairies; also against the lovers, who behold, in the interlude of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, a good-natured burlesque of their own love affairs, and laugh the loudest of all the company.

As to the characters, I have elsewhere remarked that the most striking figures in early Shakespeare were those drawn at first hand from low life; and in Section 19 Bottom

<sup>1</sup> Herein, partly, is Shakespeare's apology for excess of poetry over drama, and consequent introduction of much that could not well be represented in action. It was with the instinct of genius that the poet chose a "dream" as the subject of his lyrical indulgence, his poetic drama which, as Hazlitt remarks, "when acted is converted from a delightful fiction into a dull pantomime."

<sup>2</sup> Especially in the Epilogue.

will be mentioned in connection with Christopher Sly; but we may also regard him as an earlier Falstaff. "Good master Brook," says Falstaff, "I desire more acquaintance of you." "Good master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance," says Bottom, as he gives the phrase a rustic twist (see also "Twelfth Night," I. iii. 55); and Falstaff, with the Buck's head, and surrounded by fairies, does much to recall his ancestor with the Ass's head. But I may not pursue the parallel further, nor give more space to the characters unless I add that Theseus is a faint forecast of Henry V in his maturer hour of enjoyment and leisure. Beyond this the figures are slightly sketched; they lack individuality, and call for little comment.

But we are more concerned with the subject of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" as an autobiography: "Three plays stand out from the rest in respect of autobiographical interest and suggestion: they are 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' 'Hamlet,' and 'The Tempest'; they reveal their author at the outset, the middle, and the close of his career."<sup>1</sup> This statement is partly illustrated by the number of references to these three plays in the pages of this Handbook; and to these references I must first call the reader's attention.<sup>2</sup> Here I may add that in each of these three plays we have, besides other biographical matter, dramatic interludes and dissertations on the drama. Of this I will speak first. It is not only by way of apology for his poetic play that Shakespeare introduces his reflections on the drama, for "the best in this kind are but shadows, and the worse are no worse if imagination amend them" ("A Midsummer Night's Dream," V. 213-217). Here we have Shakespeare's recognition of the doctrine that the aesthetic faculty of the artist—the faculty of realizing and then harmonizing with the exquisite fitness

<sup>1</sup> From my edition of "The Tempest," *The Arden Shakespeare* (p. li).

<sup>2</sup> For "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Hamlet" see especially pp.

of things—implies and demands a similar faculty in ourselves; first working backwards, and then again forwards, our imagination must re-create what he has created. To take an extreme instance, it was thus with Keats when he wrote his "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

But, "the best in this kind are but shadows!" Shakespeare did not fully realize the exquisite fitness of things, even of shadows. He could not without the theory of evolution, nor could the Greeks; and we return for a moment to Bacon, "The use of this feigned history hath been to give some shadow of satisfaction, etc.," and to the other passages quoted in Chap. IV. (pp. 32, 42, 43, 45), where Bacon paraphrases Plato and Aristotle; and we now understand my remark on a former page (32), "It is strange that with such an imperfect estimate of the ideal, Shakespeare has given us the world's masterpieces in the ideal." This statement I will now further explain, but not in my own words:

- (a) For what is poesy but to create—  
 'Tis to create, and in creating live,  
 A being more intense.  
 (BYRON, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.)
- (b) For from these create he can  
 Forms *more real than living man*,  
 Nurslings of immortality.  
 (SHELLEY, *Prometheus Unbound*.)
- (c) And so *they are better, painted*—better to us,  
 Which is the same thing.  
 (BROWNING, *Fra Lippo Lippi*.)

Even more convincing is the context of these quotations as proving the reality and importance of the shadow, the ideal; but for its shadow, indeed, the world we call substance would have little value.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Even in the twentieth century we cannot live on the brute reality; the real must be interpreted and made tolerable by the ideal. Shakespeare, I think, comes nearest to a modern conception of the ideal in the line ("A Midsummer Night's Dream," V. i. 13) "Doth glance from heaven to earth,



But Shakespeare is not content with applying his destructive Baconian analysis to the illusion of stage representation and poetic imaginings, for in "The Tempest" he passes from these to reflect with some sadness on the illusory nature of that greater drama, human life; that is at once the most striking difference and the most striking resemblance between the two plays, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" drama is a shadow, in "The Tempest," life is a shadow. But Shakespeare rights himself in the later play, and does full justice to the possibilities and the sacred responsibilities of our human life, and no modern quotations need be supplied under this head.

This brings me to speak of the excrescent passages in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," the most famous of which is devoted to a consideration of the nature of poetry, and to the subject of our former paragraph in general, but this has been dealt with in Chapter IV (pp. 31-45).<sup>1</sup> A second,

from earth to heaven,' which we may paraphrase, 'Realizes the ideal, or idealizes the real, interpreter as he is between the gods and men.' But further, as we shall see in Chapter VIII, Shakespeare's work in its entirety is a splendid attempt to anticipate whole centuries of ethical and aesthetic progress. And this is the lordliest function of the poet—even of Shakespeare—to come before Science as a prophet, and after as an interpreter and idealist, and such a poet, I may add, is needed amongst us now. I have just read the public declaration of one of our leading scientists, who gives it as his opinion that Oxford ought to abandon her ethics and aesthetics, and teach only what is *useful*. We could write volumes in reply, but I see no reason why one short sentence should not be as convincing as a volume. I will frame it thus: "If in his pursuit of food and fact man is to lose his inheritance, his appreciation, and his progressive realization of the beautiful and the good, he will become 'A beast—no more' ("Hamlet," IV iv 33-35, "In Memoriam," CXX).

<sup>1</sup> To what was there stated I may add the less important conjecture that Shakespeare was indebted to Plutarch's "Morals," where we read (*Symph.*, I v) "But above all, the ravishment of the spirit or that divine inspiration which is called *enthusiasmus*, casteth body, mind, voice, and all far beyond the ordinary habit, which is the cause that the furious, raging priests of Bacchus . . . use rime and meeter: those also who by a propheticall spirit give answer by Oracle, deliver the same in verse, and few persons shall a man see starke mad, but among their raving speeches they sing and say some verses." (Holland's Translation, Ed. 1637.) I may note the debt of Plutarch to Plato in the foregoing: see also p. 41.

the reference to the wet season of 1594, has been noticed in this section, as also the third, which includes the most interesting of all Shakespeare's references to the reigning sovereign. A fourth, which, however, adapts itself more readily to the dramatic scheme, is the description of the hounds (IV. 1. 108, *sqq.*), which covers no less than twenty lines; it finds the merest suggestion in the "Knights Tale," possibly something more in Ovid and Sophocles, but more—and more certainly—in the "Hippolytus" of Seneca (30, *sqq.*); indeed, like "The poet's eye" passage (pp. 31-45) it is full of classical echoes, and again, like that passage, is written in a style and with a fervour and, we may add, with a poetic power and beauty that separates it—perhaps by an interval of years—from its context.

Connected with this autobiographical aspect of the play are the passages wherein Shakespeare takes occasion—as in "Love's Labour's Lost" and others of his earlier attempts—to criticise the productions of contemporaries, their mannerisms, vices of style and the rest; such criticism mostly betrays the beginner who has his own reputation to make. Thus, when writing the doggerel in V. 1. 289-292, and V. 1. 343-351, he may have had in mind a passage in the "Damon and Pythias" of Richard Edwards, 1582. "Ye furies . . . You sisters three, with cruel handes, With speed come stop my breath" (Ed. Hazlitt's "Dodsley," p. 44); or he may have remembered such similar rubbish as "The furies fell of Limbo lake My princely days do short . . ." ("Appius and Virginia," by R. B., 1575). Possibly, also, he throws ridicule on the extravagances of the "New Sonet of Pyramus and Thisbie" mentioned in the former division of this Section. "And then the beast with his bright blade He slew certain," etc.

## (16) ROMEO AND JULIET, 1595

*Historical Particulars*

Like so many of the legends immortalized by Shakespeare, the story of this "pair of star-crossed lovers" has a long pedigree. But we must omit mention of versions that have little or no direct bearing on the play. We begin with the *Novellino* of Massuccio of Salerno, 1476; the story of Mariotto Mignanelli and Giannozza Saraceni corresponds in many points to Shakespeare's drama. But the correspondence is much closer when we come to the "*Istoria novellamente ritrovata di due nobili Amanti*," by Luigi Da Porto, which was published at Venice about 1535, yet the nurse is still absent from the story. Next to be mentioned is Bandello, to whom Shakespeare is several times indebted; the tale is told in his *novelle* of 1554; it is the most important of these early versions, and a nurse—but not Shakespeare's nurse—appears for the first time. Pierre Boaistuau de Launay gave his version to the "*Histoires Tragiques*" of Belleforest in 1559, and as on other occasions, the French volume is doubtless with Shakespeare as he writes; with him, also, as I venture to think, is a copy of the famous story in some early dramatic form.<sup>1</sup> Apart from this conjecture, Shakespeare's immediate authority is the "*Romeus and Juliet*" of Arthur Brooke or Broke, which is a rendering of Boaistuau into English verse, 1562. The prose version of William Painter in his "*Palace of Pleasure*" (1567) would probably be read by Shakespeare, but it gave him no assistance worth mentioning.

Arthur Brooke, on the other hand, supplied the dramatist with most of the raw material that he wove into this deathless tragedy of love and death; thus early was

<sup>1</sup> Otherwise I hardly think that Shakespeare would make this early venture in original tragic drama; and Brooke in his preface asserts that he had seen "the same argument lately set forth on stage."



With others of Shakespeare's originals we need not stay to compare him, unless we add that Romeo's first "fancy" which even in Shakespeare might have imperilled the sequel, does in Bandello threaten the main interest of the romance; of course, the incident is true to life, but not all life is true to art; yet in Shakespeare, as we may concede, it is so contrived that the effect is heightened by contrast of a more or less false, or affected, or conventional love with the real passion,—“For doting—not for loving—pupil mine”; or thus—

Now old Desire doth in his death bed lie,  
And young Affection gapes to be his heir  
That fair for which love groan'd for and would die,  
With tender Juliet match'd, is now not fair

The question of date brings with it another question we have to ask so often, especially as regards these earlier plays—which of many possible dates shall we select as representative? for, in respect of style, taste, power, finish, the drama is almost patchwork, some parts, we may say, are years younger than others (First Quarto)

The traces are the Moone shine wat'rie beames,  
The collers crickets bones, the lash of filmes,  
Her waggoner is a small gray coated flie  
Not halfe so big as is a little worme,  
Pickt from the lasse finger of a maide

how many years, shall we say, are represented by the growth of the poet's art which has power to effect this transformation (Dowden's text)

Her traces of the smallest spider's web  
Her collars, of the moonshine's watery beams  
Her whip, of cricket's bone, the lash, of film,  
Her waggoner, a small gray coated gnat,  
Not half so big as a round little worm  
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, even in Shakespeare, a recast may involve trouble; the Quarto rhyming line “That most are busied when they're most alone,” has to give place to the rhymeless verbiage of I : 131 and 132 (cf “The Tempest,” III. : 14 15)

On a larger scale we may compare—and most unfavourably contrast—such a scene as III. ii. with others before and after, say II. ii. and III. v. No such disparity, so far as I have observed, exists in any other writer; and perhaps no higher praise can be bestowed on the exceeding beauty of the better portions of the play than the fact that the intolerable euphuisms, conceits, nay, the puerile quibbles, the lack of taste and judgement displayed in such other portions as III. ii. are powerless to condemn the drama.

Perhaps we may refer the first sketch of "Romeo and Juliet" to the year 1591, and a more finished draft to the year 1595. According to the First Quarto it had been played many times "with great applause" before 1597.<sup>1</sup> It is the nurse, if we may take her seriously, who supplies us with the date 1591; she says in I. iii 23, "'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years" that Juliet was weaned; the child "could have run and waddled all about"; but three years old would be late for weaning (Juliet is two weeks short of fourteen). However, the earthquake is probably that which occurred in England, April 6th, 1580, and eleven years from that would be 1591; if Shakespeare has another play before him (but this bit of realism is surely his) it may be an earthquake felt at Verona in 1570. Yet if the evidence of the nurse is inconclusive, the play in an early form, or parts of it, may have been cast some years before 1596, the acting date; still, of this we have no direct evidence; nor are we assisted by the resemblances to Daniel's "Complaint of Rosamond," 1592 for Shakespeare may have been the borrower, as he seems to have been when writing his "Lucrece." The expression "gapes to be his heir," in the quotation on p. 170, is almost certainly a recollection of Swinburn's "Briefe Treatise of

<sup>1</sup> 'By the right Honourable the L. of Hunsdon his servants.' Shakespeare's company were "Lord Hunsdon's servants" from July 22nd, 1596, till April 17th, 1597.

Testaments," 1590, where it occurs more than once—"such as do gape for greater bequests"—"to gape and crie upon the testator." "The first and second cause" (II. iv. 27), may refer to "Vincentio Saviolo his Practise" (1594 and 1595); but many other treatises on Quarrelling and Duelling had preceded Saviolo's, such as "The Book of Honor and Arms," 1589. Nor will resemblances between this play and "The Wisdom of Doctor Dodipoll" (1600), or "Wily Beguiled" (1597), serve our turn; more to the purpose are echoes of Marlowe, *e.g.*, "The Jew of Malta" (about 1589) (II. i.).

But stay, what star shines yonder in the east?  
The loadstar of my life, if Abigail.

which we may compare with II. ii. 2, 3. See also a former quotation, footnote, p. 169. Echoes also of Lyly may be heard; and the lines "O love! O life! not life, but love in death!" and others in the context may hint sly humour in their recollection of similar exclamatory lines in Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy" (about 1592). Finally, under this head of chronology, we note an allusion to the play by John Weever, in his "Epigrammes" (published 1599), which may be assigned to the year 1596; another—

I set thy lips abroach, from whence doth flow  
Naught but pure Juliet and Romeo.

occurs in Marston's "Scourge of Villanie," 1598.

Apart from this external evidence, the style bespeaks an early date for the play, and further, as we have noticed, an earlier date for some parts than for others, especially those that rely for effect upon rhyme. But besides the marks of addition and revision, we have signs of experiment in various literary forms; but for its theme of youthful passion, "Romeo and Juliet" would be too lyrical for a tragic drama; and what variety in the lyrical element! dialogues in the elegiac quatrain; couplets, sestets,

the numbers that Petrarch flowed in,<sup>1</sup> snatches of song, aubade, epithalamium—surely these are not the notes of tragedy; yes, these are the notes of any tragedy of young love<sup>2</sup>—but not of hate, nor greed, nor jealousy, nor rival houses, nor any wrong:

O why should love, like men in drinking songs  
Spice his fair banquet with the dust of death? . . .  
The dusky strand of Death inwoven here  
With dear Love's tie, makes Love himself more dear.

On August 5th, 1596, the play was entered in the Stationers' Registers, and in the following year the First Quarto appeared with the title: "An Excellent conceited Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet, As it hath bene often (with great applause) plaid publicquely, by he right Honourable the L. of Hunsdon his Servants. London, Printed by John Danter. 1597."

A second Quarto was published in 1599: "The Most Excellent and lamentable Tragedie of Romco and Juliet. Newly corrected, augmented and amended: As it hath bene sundry times publicquely acted by the right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his Servants. London Printed by Thomas Creede, for Cuthbert Burby, and are to be sold at his shop neare the Exchange. 1599."

This was followed by a third in 1609, which was printed for John Smethwicke, and the title-page now informs us that the play had been "sundrie times publicquely Acted, by the Kings Majesties Servants at the Globe."

The next Quarto, also printed for John Smethwicke, is undated; in some copies, apparently those issued first, we find "Written by W. Shake-speare" immediately after the word "Globe"; in later copics Shakespeare's name is omitted.

Yet another Quarto, printed by "R. Young for John Smethwicke," was published in 1637.

<sup>1</sup> In pattern, of course, the sonnets are Shakespeare, not Petrarch.

<sup>2</sup> This is the only example in Shakespeare.



Of these Quartos the first three are the most important; on the third was based the Folio text of 1623, some trifling variations being introduced, and some improvements being effected in regard to punctuation and stage directions. The First Quarto is the usual patchwork (see chap. v, p. 57), made up partly from memory, partly from notes taken down during the performance; the Second Quarto is a more faithful copy of the same early draft of the play. Before the Third Quarto appeared, Shakespeare had revised his work; and I may add—what may have occurred to the reader—that in these versions of the drama of “Romeo and Juliet,” we have a valuable guide to the growth of Shakespeare’s art.

The time of the action is as follows: (Sunday) I. ; II. i., ii. (Monday) II. iii.-vi. ; III. i.-iv. (Tuesday) III. v. ; IV. i.-iii. (Wednesday) IV. iv., v. (Thursday) V. (Friday) end of V. iii.

### *Critical Remarks.<sup>1</sup>*

Let us fervently hope that all readers of “Romeo and Juliet” will exclaim as they close their volume, “This is the loveliest of love poems—except one”; and should any ask wonderingly—it may be indignantly—“What is that one?” let him or her reflect that Shakespeare is about to devote some twenty years to the study and the practice of concrete presentation of the ideal; and it can hardly be supposed that in this first essay he has reached the highest ideal of the highest theme of his branch of art—Love. (See Chapter VII.)

Let me repeat my definition of the ideal, “Progressive morality grown in the gardens of art.” If this definition is true, it should be abundantly illustrated by the work of the best ideal craftsman of the world; I think it is so.

Briefly, as compared with the ideal love of Ferdinand and Miranda, this passion play of “Romeo and Juliet” is

<sup>1</sup> For “Romeo and Juliet” as a tragedy see Chapter VIII

almost on a level with the real; it has the beauty of earth; the other has the beauty and the holiness of heaven on earth. But I will quote from my Introduction to "The Tempest":

"In 'The Tempest,' love is refined even beyond the most delicate of conceptions, whether social or literary:

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what 's a heaven for?

"and although on the one side the love of Miranda is linked to earth and to our average experience, yet on the other it has affinities with a state of society in which all men and women are ideally pure, and where the conventional pruderies that are a necessary safeguard in a corrupt state of society, would be altogether out of place:

Hence, bashful cunning,  
And prompt me, plain and holy innocence.

(III. i 81, 82.)

"In other words, it is an ideal of love that a great poet might be expected to put upon his stage when all other types had been exhausted."

This general statement I will now support with a few particulars; the ideal beauty and purity of the love of Ferdinand and Miranda, may be discovered in the speech and the experience of the lovers. To begin with the speech; it is absolutely purged of even conventional coarseness; not a word is spoken either by Ferdinand or Miranda that could jar on our finest sense of taste or delicacy. Compare this with the language of Juliet—Act III. ii., however we regard it, alone will serve; I do not quote; those who seek will find. Let us admit that such is the real, or at least, the conventional language of the time; therefore Miranda's is ideal.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Midway between these stands Viola, who links the early realism with the later idealism

Yet more convincing is a comparison of what I may call the experience of the two pairs of lovers. Romeo's may be read in such a passage as I. i. 218 *sqq.*; or again, summing up false love, he admits, "This love feel I, that feel no love in this." Now we listen to Ferdinand as he records his experiences in "The Tempest" (III. i. 39-46), and we recognize that the man who makes this candid confession may welcome, appreciate, and deserve ideal purity in woman.

More to our purpose is the experience of the women; from infancy Miranda had been kept unspotted from the world. This was Shakespeare's opportunity, and right nobly has he seized it. "I do not know One of my sex . . . how features are abroad, I am skillless of. . . ." All this is denied to Juliet, if only through the coarse garrulity of her nurse.

Now I think we may understand that the ideal is progressive morality grown in the gardens of art; let us further believe that Shakespeare so understood it.

But if he did, his belief comes much later than this play of "Romeo and Juliet," and as I pointed out in the former Section, his views of art, derived mostly from Aristotle, are narrow in proportion to the vast ideal prospect of his creations. In this play, for example, we have too much of what I may call retrogressive realism.<sup>1</sup> Even in his day the coarseness of Mercutio was a reversion in art; there is no such coarseness in the mouth of Trinculo, nor the drunken Stephano, nor even of the monster Caliban. Again, his first false notions of realism are manifest in other particulars. I have only space for one. I refer to the shock we feel when the old nurse, who had a regard for Juliet's honour that might seem to rise above her station—"If you should lead her into a fool's paradise . . . the gentlewoman is young . . . it were an ill thing to be

<sup>1</sup> See "Handbook to Tennyson," p. 40, footnote. The purpose of these remarks is fully explained in Chapter VIII.

offered to any gentlewoman"—when, after this, I say, she relapses into the gross immorality of her kind—

Beshrew my very heart,  
I think you are happy in this second match,  
For it excels your first : or if it did not,  
Your first is dead, or 'twere as good he were.  
As living here and you no use to him.

*Jul.* Speakest thou from thy heart ?

*Nurse.* And from my soul too ;  
Or else beshrew them both.

*Jul.*

Amen !

Three things in this drama remain to be noticed; the strain of humour that dies away only to leave death more desolate; the Italian atmosphere that adds a loveliness even to love; and the lyric charm that bows our very heart to its pathos and beauty.

(17) *ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL*, 1595 (—1604)

*Historical Particulars*

As far as can be ascertained, "*All's Well that Ends Well*" was first printed in the Folio of 1623. But I think it extremely probable that we have before us the play mentioned by Meres in 1598 under the title of "*Love's Labour's Wonne*";<sup>1</sup> we may take it for granted that such a play existed, that it was by Shakespeare, and that none other of his plays has such a good claim to a title that was further suggested by Boccaccio. It is also possible that originally the title was double—"All's Well that Ends Well, or Love's Labour's Won" and that Meres preserved the latter half; and a double title may be echoed in the "*Epilogue*,"—"All is well ended if this suit be won."

Apart from all this, the story is one that delighted Shakespeare's earlier fancy, and he may have found it

<sup>1</sup> That the alliterative notion had taken shape in Shakespeare's mind might be inferred from "*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*" (I. i. 33), where we read of love, "If lost, why then a grievous labour won."

when he was reading Painter's "Palace of Pleasure" to get a few additional hints for his "Romeo and Juliet." The play obviously belongs in great part to Shakespeare's early period; it has affinities with "Love's Labour's Lost," and "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," rather than with the later comedies.

I further believe that the drama thus early written was remodelled by Shakespeare at a later date, probably when he was making his first sketch of "Hamlet." As far as the mere text is concerned, the earlier work is not seldom easily separable, and in most cases is betrayed by its rhymes. In II. i. for example, lines 133-213, we have a passage that should be compared with the "Mousetrap" tragedy in "Hamlet"—the rhyming verse of an earlier period, as we find it here: "Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round," etc. ("Hamlet," III. ii. 165, *sqq.*), we place beside "Ere twice the horses of the sun shall bring," etc. ("All's Well," II. i. 164, *sqq.*), or again: "Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament," etc. ("Hamlet," III. ii. 108, *sqq.*), and "Oft expectation fails, and most oft there Where most it promises," etc. ("All's Well," II. i. 145, *sqq.*). If we now compare with these lines of II. i., such other lines as IV. ii. 1-50, or III. ii. 101-132, we are conscious of an interval of some ten years that comes between the earlier and the later passages.

Other traces of an earlier draft are found in the sonnet letter of Helena (III. iv. 4-16), and the rhyming letter of Parolles (IV. iii. 252-260), and the similar rhymes that embody the reflections of the Countess in I. iii. 134-140. But most of all, the motive points to an early date, as will be explained in the next section.

Under this head of date we may select the following from authorities that were probably consulted by Shakespeare: 'The Unfortunate Traveller,' by Nash, 1594; Mendoza's 'Theorique and Practice of Warre' (IV. iii. 160-165), translated by Holy, 1597; "Tom Drum's Vants," etc., in

"Gentle Craft" (ii. 8), 1598 (Stokes). Further it is the opinion of Elze that V. iii. 83-87 may refer to the gift of a ring by Elizabeth to Essex in 1596.

In this play Shakespeare has dramatized the story of Giletta of Narbon, as told by Painter in his "Palace of Pleasure," 1566; but he also read it in the Italian of Boccaccio, from which Painter had rendered it into English. Shakespeare heightened effect by making Helena poor instead of rich, and he added the incomparable characters of Lafeu and the Countess; also Parolles, who is an earlier Pistol, the clown also, who, whether earlier or later, is a shrewd knave and an unhappy, compared with Launce or even with Speed.

According to Mr. Daniel, the duration of this play is eleven days of stage time, with intervals, involving a period of about three months. The days are thus distributed: 1st, I. 1.; interval; 2nd, I. ii. iii.; interval; 3rd, II. 1. ii.; interval; 4th, II. iii. iv. v.; interval; 5th, III. 1. ii.; 6th, III. iii. iv.; interval; 7th, III. v.; 8th, III. vi. vii. IV. 1. ii.; 9th, IV. iii. iv., interval; 10th, IV v V. 1.; 11th, V. ii. iii.

### *Critical Remarks*

Inequalities of style and treatment render still more difficult the task of criticising a play which at its best I do not read with unmixed pleasure. "Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase"; the theme is an irritating one, and this may be a reason why I cannot take much interest or much delight in either of the characters, Bertram or Helena. Certainly the Venus and Adonis exaggeration and myth is left far behind, but in spite of the genius discovered in the presentment of Helena, we are still far short of the supreme art that created Viola ("Twelfth Night"). For Viola "never told her love"; "O, they love least that let men know their love" ("Two Gentlemen of Verona," I. ii. 33); but Helena made her love a matter of public bargain, (II. ii. 196, 197)—

Then shalt thou give me with thy kingly hand  
What husband in thy power I will command.

Shall we wonder that Bertram refused such love? on the contrary, this, as it appears to me, is the young man's one merit; "the prisoned eagle will not pair." Besides, the taming of a man shrew is inglorious as that other (p. 192).

But Bertram is one of the many characters in Shakespeare—and indeed in all fiction—who are more sinned against by antithesis than sinful in themselves; his mother approves him; her son was a second husband, and the husband was noble; Helena approves him; she had known him well and long—"Twas pretty, to see him every hour"; and she had discernment; she saw through Parolles at a glance. Yet Bertram, thus presented as unimpeachable, must be degraded, in order to give colour to the forward claims of Helena, and to restore to her love the virtue it had lost, by making it henceforth a work of redemption. Therefore Bertram will lean on the hollow Parolles, whom no one else would think of trusting; he must demean himself and quibble and lie, till at length we wish Helena joy of her bargain. Parolles is another failure; if he had the wit of Falstaff it would not become his weakness; as it is, his wit and himself are alike contemptible. But of Lafeu the opposite is the fact; for his wit, like himself, is genuine and genial; he is the best example in Shakespeare of an old warrior and courtier, as Gonzalo is of an old courtier and counsellor. And as if to do justice to both sexes, Shakespeare has painted, and painted exquisitely in the Countess of Rousillon, that most difficult of subjects, a lady whom age has not touched either in dignity, beauty, or sweetness. These two are the merit of the piece; even the good Monsieur Lavache is by no means in excellent fooling, and some of us may be inclined to agree with Lafeu where he says, "I begin to be aweary of thee." The text, moreover, is often below the level of the characters:

*Count.* Which better than the first, O dear heaven, bless !  
Or, ere they meet, in me, O nature, cesse !

But the play, as we might expect from a late revision, is not without fine passages ; there is also deep thought in the earlier portions, such as the moralizing in I. i. 231-244, or "the colours of good and evil" in IV. iii. 82-86 ; and it is often paralleled by the work of Bacon, some of which was published about this time.

(18) KING JOHN, 1596

*Historical Particulars*

"King John" stands somewhat apart from the rest of the historical plays of Shakespeare ; it is no member of a cycle, though possibly, as will be noticed in Chapter VIII, it was intended to be the first of a cycle—the Plantagenet. To this chapter also I must refer for the date of the play, but a few particulars may be added here.

Hammet Shakespeare died on the 12th August, 1596, and some critics find a reflection of the poet's loss in the lament of Constance for Arthur ; but I should hesitate to allow such a conjecture to stand as evidence of date. More to our purpose is the evidence of style, of poetic and dramatic power, which warrants us in assigning the play to a year not later than 1594 ; and this in spite of the usual inequalities of workmanship. The play certainly follows "Richard II,"<sup>1</sup> and as certainly precedes the First Part of "Henry IV," for which it prepares us by the humorous character of the Bastard, and by adhering less strictly to historical fact ; though in this regard it follows the old play, of which we must now give some account.

This is "The Troublesome Raigne of John King of

<sup>1</sup> As regards the verse, we note a reaction against rhyme, though there are a few couplets, quatrains, and sestets. We may add that the curiously uneven style lends some support to a conjecture of later revision and interpolation.



England with the discouerie of King Richard Gordelions Base Sonne (Vulgarly named The Bastard Fawconbridge): also the death of King John at Swinstead Abbey. As it was (sundry times) publikely acted by the Queenes' Maiesties Players, in the Honourable Citie of London. Imprinted at London for Sampson Clarke, and are to be solde at his Shop on the backe-side of the Royal Exchange. 1591."

The play is in two parts, the Second "Conteining the death of Arthur Plantaginet, the landing of Lewes, and the poysoning of King John at Swinstead Abbey."

It was probably written about 1589, and later editions with unparalleled impertinence add Shakespeare's name to their title-page; but the writer is unknown, although Lodge, Peele, and Greene have been put forward as claimants to the authorship; and some critics hold that Shakespeare himself was responsible at least for the plot. This certainly is well constructed; but the text and the characterization are poor indeed,<sup>1</sup> and while following the main incidents, Shakespeare has practically re-written the drama; here he expands, there he condenses or rejects; some characters he adds, others he re-creates; and he seldom condescends to reproduce as much as a line of the dialogue. He derives almost all his material from this play, though he may have consulted Holinshed occasionally. "The Troublesome Raigne" is itself based on Holinshed; perhaps also on an older play now lost, and it probably owes something to "De Joanne Anglorum Rege, Kynge Johan." This, which may be dated 1547, comes between the old moralities and the early histories; it is the work of John Bale, Bishop of Ossory, who wrote Miracle Plays. The Protestant Bishop was much in earnest when writing his "Kynge Johan," in which he attacked the Romish Church, and some of his intolerant vigour has

<sup>1</sup> It is better work, however, than the "Famous Victories of Henry V" and the "True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of York." (Sections 9 and 21.)

descended to the "Troublesome Raigne." Moreover, the later play adopts some of his plan, and repeats some of his language; his patriotic spirit may also be recognized therein; indeed, the most interesting feature in the old play is the character *England*, an oppressed widow, who, under different conditions, plays the part of Faulconbridge.

"King John" was first printed in the Fol. of 1623, and no earlier draft is known to us; but it is represented in the list of Shakespeare's plays given by Meres in 1598.

The time of the play is seven days, with intervals, comprising in all not more than three or four months.

#### *Critical Remarks.*

As will be explained in Chapter VIII, the patriotic note struck in "Richard II" swells to its full volume in "King John."

Nevertheless, though dominated by this higher dramatic purpose, which lives throughout the play in every word and action of the gallant Faulconbridge, Shakespeare never allows his tragic figures to leave the stage, even if they withdraw now and then from its front. The story of the play is the story of Arthur, its tragedy the death of Arthur and "the life and death of King John." It is not, however, a tragedy in the strict dramatic sense, but rather an inorganic drama which exhibits some remarkable tragic characters. John himself, weak, cruel, and craven, rises at times to a tragic grandeur; Constance lives in our memories as being perhaps the only heroine among the women of nine historical dramas; and, as to Arthur, he is scarcely a dramatic character with the rest, but rather a vision of something too gentle to be human, too good for human tears; and while literary judgement is suspended, description must take refuge in similitude; he is, let us say, a fledgeling dove in a cage of vultures, a frail Alpine harebell swept down by an avalanche: such innocence, tender

pity, and gentle pathos were never blended and embodied before or since in drama or poem.

For all this, we feel that Shakespeare was hampered by his subject; hence, partly, the drama of episodes, the zig-zag plot, the forced rhetoric of the play, its somewhat frigid poetry, its figures half drawn, or drawn into the background. The King, as we have seen, is one of these; still, in order to understand what is meant by "Shakespeare," as compared, for example, with the author of "The Troublesome Raigne," let us take another glance at that play. We find no hint whatever of the wonderful scene (III iii.) in which Shakespeare suggests the dark deed to Hubert in monosyllables that fall like drops of molten lead. Or, again:

*John.* Art thou there, villain, furies haunt thee still  
For killing him whom all the world laments.

*Hub.* Why, here 's, my lord, your highness' hand and seal,  
Charging on life's regard to do the deed.

*John.* Ah, dull conceited peasant, know'st thou not  
It was a damned execrable deed . . .

*Hub.* My lord, attend the happy tale I tell . . .  
He lives, my lord, the sweetest youth alive.

This is nearly all that Shakespeare found in his original—the merest hint for his famous expansion (IV. ii. 181-250) of the aphorism—"How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds Makes ill deeds done" (II. 219, 220).

On the other hand "The Troublesome Raigne" is poor enough certainly; but I think it has lost something by inevitable comparison with Shakespeare, and, in fairness, I will mention its dying words of Arthur, which Shakespeare has rejected; yet rightly, for although the speech I refer to is the best thing in the old play, it might have been bettered by omission of the first eight lines. Indeed, the genius of Shakespeare is displayed most strikingly where it deals with tender years and helpless innocence. This may be seen in "Richard III" (IV. ii. 98-104, and

IV. i. 23); so here in "King John," where Arthur pleads with Hubert; and, lastly, to do full justice to this genius of Shakespeare, I will quote once more from the older play:

*Arthur.* . . . let the black tormentors of deep Tartary  
Upbraid them with this damnèd enterprise,  
Inflicting change of tortures on their souls.  
Delay not, Hubert, my orisons are ended.

Here (and there is more of like import), is indeed a travesty of tender years and helpless innocence; Shakespeare rightly puts some such vituperation in the mouth of the bastard (IV. iii. 116-159), and not of "that child" (line 156). Moreover, partly from his finer taste, partly from the large heart that would neither be bound by any creed nor condemn it, he omits a coarse scene in the old play that holds up the monastic system to contempt and ridicule. But there is no reference in "The Troublesome Raigne" to Magna Charta, and things thereto appertaining; the author was an artist, not a historian, and had at least some skill in choosing his incidents—his dramatic ground; but nothing grew there. It was left to Shakespeare a bare and barren patch, and from it sprang the immortal flowers of drama, Constance and Arthur.

(19) THE TAMING OF THE SHREW, 1596-7

*Historical Particulars*

Like that of "Henry VI" and some others, the genesis of "The Taming of the Shrew" is a difficult problem. In 1594 a play was published with the title: "A Pleasant Conceited Historie, called The taming of a Shrew. As it was Sundry times acted by the Right honorable the Earle of Pembrook his seruants. Printed at London . . . 1594. 4°."

This play of "A Shrew" was probably written about 1592 by a clever playwright, who worked on a still older

drama, who imitated Marlowe, and who took hints from the "Supposes" of Gascoigne (see below)

We may now conjecture a recast of "A Shrew" possibly referred to by Henslowe ("Diary," June 11th, 1594) as "the tamynge of a shrowe," acted by the Lord Admiral's and Lord Chamberlain's men. Again the adapter, who draws more largely on Gascoigne for the Bianca story, is unknown.

Next, as we may suppose, comes Shakespeare, though some would connect him with the earlier versions, but I think it best to believe that about the year 1596 he remodelled the former play, especially the Induction and the Petruchio scenes, but retained a good deal of the Bianca portions and the inferior literary material—for example, the lumbering six or seven accent couplets of an older style of comedy, as we find them in I 1 243-7, and elsewhere.

The parts of "The Taming of the Shrew" that are assigned more especially to Shakespeare are the following: Induction, II 1 169-326, III 1 1 125, 151-241, IV 1 111, v, V 1 1-177. His handiwork has the usual marks of his genius, among which I generally place first his imagery—his transcripts from nature, I give one instance (II 1 255-7)

Kate like the hazel twig  
Is straight and slender and as brown in hue  
As hazel nuts (Cf also 'Pericles,' V 1 110)

And not seldom Shakespeare's jewels are discoverable by the fact that they were found worthy of close imitation; for example, Tennyson's Kate ("The Brook") was "Straight, but as lissome as a hazel wand . . . her hair In gloss and hue the chestnut"

But apart from the above selected passages, I certainly think that Shakespeare revised the whole play, and as an instance of his editorial hand we may perhaps mention I 1 1-43; here possibly we have an example of his

"Love's Labour's Lost" method, the method of "putting his hook into a worm as if he loved it"; for he derides the "me" of familiar and emphatic dialogue (there are examples in "a Shrew") which he nevertheless uses elsewhere with excellent effect, as in "1 Henry IV," II. iv. 223, 241, etc.; indeed, we should scarcely know Falstaff if he forswore this characteristic pronoun. But in addition to such minor indications of Shakespeare's presence in the play generally, we may note its many affinities with his other dramas; the beating of Grumio in I. ii. may be compared with "The Comedy of Errors," IV. iv; and there is much more that is common to these two plays. Again, some of the quick-witted contests between Katharina and Petruchio remind us a little of the relations between Hotspur and his Kate, and the business-like wooing of Katharine of France by Henry V; and there are resemblances to one or two scenes in "The Merry Wives of Windsor." Next, the hunting scene of the Induction recalls "A Midsummer Night's Dream," IV. i. 108-227, which includes an episode in the career of Bottom that I shall refer to again as being reflected in this play. And lastly, lines 79-104 of the Induction almost certainly anticipate the reception of the players by Hamlet.

These resemblances have some bearing on our next inquiry, the date of the play, which I have assigned conjecturally to the year 1596. Certainly "The Taming of the Shrew" is not mentioned by Meres in 1598, but the omission may be explained by assuming that it was not then recognized as Shakespeare's, an assumption borne out by the other fact that it is one of the four plays unregistered by the editors of the Folio (see Chap V.). In his "Metamorphosis of Ajax," 1596, Sir John Harrington speaks of "the book of Taming a Shrew, which hath made a number of us so perfect, that now every one can rule a shrew in our country, save he that hath her"; but the writer may be referring to the play of "A Shrew," and

Shakespeare's comedy may come later. On the other hand, it certainly precedes by several years the allusion by Samuel Rowlands in his "Whole Crew of kind gossips," 1609:

The chieftest Art I have I will bestow  
About a work cald "Taming of the Shrow."

Altogether, taking into account the subject, the style, and resemblances to other plays of Shakespeare, we cannot be far wrong in assigning "The Taming of the Shrew" to the years 1596 or 1597.

Partly as additional items of chronological evidence, I will now mention one or two other plays akin to this in subject. In 1599 (December 19th) Henslowe records the "Patient Grissil" of Dekker and others, which seems written in a spirit of reaction against Shakespeare's Petruchio system, a spirit also manifest in Fletcher's "The Woman's Prize, or the Tamer Tamed" (before 1622); though Dekker's lost comedy, "A medyson for a curste wiffe" (Henslowe, July 19th, 1602), should have maintained the earlier doctrine.

"The Taming of the Shrew," in its present form, was first printed in the Folio of 1623, and a Quarto, based on the Folio, was published in 1631. But this volume need not detain us, and we now proceed to the sources of Shakespeare's play. "The Shrew" and the "Shrew Tamer" had long been popular in English literature, and they occur much earlier in an old German poem (Lassberg's "Liedersaal," II. 499, and I. 295); also, in a form closer to our play in a Jutland legend (Grundtoig's "Danish Folklore," i. 88). Later, we have them in the Spanish "El Conde Lucanor" (1575), and less clearly in the "Piacevoli Notti" of Straparola (Bk. II. viii. 2; 1553). In English there was a long ballad—we may date it about 1560—entitled "A Merry Jest of a Shrewd and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel's Skin, for her Good Behaviour," to which, however, Shakespeare's play owes little or nothing.

The Bianca underplot is derived, as we have stated above, from the "Supposes" of George Gascoigne, and this again is based on Ariosto's "I Suppositi" (1509), both the prose and the verse forms. Gascoigne's prose comedy is dated 1566. The Latin lesson, as Professor Herford suggests, may have been derived from a scene in "The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London" (printed 1590).

We have now come to the third story involved in "The Taming of the Shrew," that, namely, of the drunken Tinker. It takes us back to "The Sleeper Awakened" in the "Arabian Nights"; but Heuterus in "De Rebus Burgundicis" (1584) tells us that the jest of the Induction was actually played on a drunken man in Brussels by Duke Philip the Good (c. 1440). The tale was often retold; but in versions later than 1600. Our play, therefore, derived it most likely from Heuterus, aided possibly by the story of Dionysius and Damocles (see Cicero's "Tusculan Disputations," V. 21). There was, however, a story of a drunken Tinker in the lost collection of tales by Richard Edwardes, 1570, and this may have been used by the author of our play; but the fragment known as "The Waking Man's Dream," which Norton in 1845 regarded as part of a reprint of the collection by Edwardes, is probably a later and distinct version borrowed in part from "The Taming of the Shrew."

To the "Comedy of Errors" Shakespeare supplied a pathetic frame; here a comic setting encloses the comedy, or rather, encloses it on one side; for the merry fooling of Christopher Sly, which reaches a dramatic conclusion in "The Taming of a Shrew," is interrupted in Shakespeare's play, where the "Induction" is an introduction, and little more. But in the earlier comedy Sly makes an occasional remark—or is reported to be asleep—throughout the performance, till he is carried back in his drunken slumber to the ale-house door—or near it; and at the



close, when he awakes, and hears the ominous words of the tapster, "Your wife will course you for dreaming here to-night," he answers sleepily, "Will she? I know how to tame a shrew, I dreamt upon it all this night till now. . . . I'll to my wife presently and tame her too." Why did Shakespeare break off this pleasant encircling play? His work has marks of haste, and this may be one reason; or the semi-serious close given to the piece by the overtamed Katharina made it impossible for him to complete the enveloping comedy; but other reasons will be suggested in the next section.

It may be added that like "2 Henry IV" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor," "The Taming of the Shrew" is rich in allusion to names and places connected with Shakespeare's early life; such as Burton-Heath, and Wincot, and Marian Hacket, and Sly himself.

The duration of the action is not easy to determine. The following are Mr. Daniel's suggestions. 1st day, I.; 2nd day, II. (interval of a day or two); 3rd day, III. i, Saturday, eve of wedding; 4th day, III. ii. IV. i, Sunday, the wedding-day (Interval?); 5th day, IV. ii.; 6th day, IV. iii.-v.; V. (? The Second Sunday)

### *Critical Remarks*

Shakespeare worked half-heartedly at this play; he was beginning to lose his faith in the primæval doctrine that a woman is a piece of household furniture, "household Kates," II. i. 280; (cf. "household stuff," Induction, II. 143), or, if a live thing, that she should place her hands below her husband's foot (V. ii. 177); therefore we find no poetry, no pathos, in "The Taming of the Shrew," as we find it in "The Comedy of Errors"; and what is more remarkable, we have little philosophy—"Aristotle's checks" (? "ethicks") are disregarded. Shakespeare creates Petruchio and Katharina; they butt together well. They could not do otherwise where his genius is at work; but again,

he worked in haste, and, as I think, with some impatience.

When a play borders on the farcical, and is best enjoyed as such, it is difficult to speak intelligibly of the characters. But if Shakespeare is to be taken seriously, as critics assert, then it is, I repeat, the earlier Shakespeare who retains some spice of the older doctrine—"Man is the hunter, woman is his game"; or, to state it in his own words, as in "The Taming of the Shrew":

Will you, nill you, I will marry you

But further, as the doctrine even in our day has its defenders—for so we may judge from the commentaries on this play—it will be advisable to reconsider briefly the whole question. We must begin by asking, Is either of the two characters, Petruchio and Katharina, to be regarded as abnormal? The answer should be, "Assuredly not"; for even a farce should be artistic enough to reject whatever differs from the kindly race of men. And although Baptista describes his daughter as a "hilding of a devilish spirit," and Hortensio speaks of her as possessed by "a most impatient devilish spirit," while Tranio pronounces her "curst and shrewd," Petruchio nevertheless summarizes the lady and himself in this single line

I am as peremptory as she proud minded

that is, "if she is abnormal, so am I." And, as a fact, if Kate is abnormal, it is after her taming, not before, for nothing surely in all Shakespeare is more insulting to woman's nature—and I may add, to man's also—than are Katharina's words and actions in the last scene. Indeed, it might almost appear that Petruchio, and not the untamed shrew, is a character removed from our average experience, as where Katharina protests (II. i. 288, 289)

You have showed a tender fatherly regard  
To wish me wed to one half lunatic,  
A mad cap ruffian and a swearing Jack . . .

Further, when viewed in the light of an earlier day, the wooing of Lady Anne by Crookback was neither so high-handed nor so unnatural; yet the wooer on that occasion was compelled to confess ("Richard III," I. ii. 228, 229):

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?  
Was ever woman in this humour won?

Still, it is best to assume that this strange pair of lovers are a type or species; that neither is an isolated monstrosity; for only under these conditions can we meet the champions of Petruchio on their own ground. They tell us that the moral of the play is wholesome, that Kate attempted to trample on a natural instinct, that Petruchio did her a real service, and was cruel only to be kind; they tell us, moreover, in the same breath that Shakespeare gave his audience the credit of acquaintance with the older play, in which Ferando (*i.e.* Petruchio) knew that Kate "would be married faine," and where Kate herself confesses:

I will consent and marrie him . . .  
And match him to; or else his manhood's good.

We reply to the latter first, and point out that the genius of Shakespeare deliberately omitted the above disclosures which defeated the main purpose of his drama; next, and as briefly, we dismiss the former arguments, because, like the play itself, they are *ethically retrogressive*, and therefore pernicious; they would take us back to a state of society nearer to the savage, when man had a will and woman none:

Will you, nill you, I will marry you;

and we merely add that progressive morality has formulated a new doctrine which not only gives woman the right of rejecting the man who employs such language as the above, but also—and this is yet more to our purpose—expects that every woman of sense and modesty should so

reject him. Finally, I have only to quote the newer doctrine as it appears in Shakespeare's later and wiser plays

My mistress, dearest,  
*And I thus humble ever*  
 ("The Tempest," III : 86 87)

And now let us glance up at the balcony above the stage, for even if the presenters are there no longer, it will be none the less a relief and a pleasure to turn away our eyes from these overdrawn or conventional personages of Padua or Verona, while we recall the inimitable and infinite naturalness of old Sly's son of Burton-heath, and the fat ale-wife of Wincot. Christopher Sly is one of those delightful characters in early Shakespeare who are drawn not from books, nor from the brain, but from life, he was well known, as I suspect, in the Stratford countryside, and I think we have lately met a near neighbour of his, bully Bottom Sly in the older play, learnt, as we have seen, this art of shrew-taming, and meant to make trial of it on his wife, yet forsooth he had been drunk—or asleep mostly—while the play was in progress, and so the former editions clumsily put this in his mouth "I dreamt upon it all this night" Shakespeare no doubt saw the mistake, so he dismissed Sly in better time, but he saw something more, namely, that Bottom might be expected to trouble his head about the taming of the Fairy Queen sooner than Christopher Sly should learn any such lesson as this of the play, or carry it home

Tame me you drunken rogue a pair of stocks —  
 This bucket—rounds—tame me—get you to bed!  
 There now, take that—and that, tame me, indeed!

for so we anticipate the musical rejoinder of Mistress Sly (See former section of this review "Your wife will course—i.e., chastise—you for dreaming here to-night")

## (20) THE MERCHANT OF VENICE. 1596

*Historical Particulars*

Few indeed among the titles of the plays of Shakespeare are at first view so slight an index to the story that follows: the word "Venice" no doubt had its attractions at this time, but the Jew was a more powerful name to conjure with. Possibly Marlowe's "Jew of Malta" ruled the word out of the title, and "Venice" came next in interest; all was popular that came from Italy:

Whose manners still our tardy apish nation  
Limps after in base imitation.

("Richard II," II. i. 22, 23.)

and we may compare "the Venesyon comedy" mentioned by Henslowe as a new play in 1594, unless, as is possible, the writer is making a rough note of Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice." The Quartos, we may add, are careful to mention the Jew on their title-pages; we meet with the word also in the following paragraph:

"The Merchant of Venice" was entered on the Register of the Stationers' Company on July 22nd, 1598: "The Marchaunt of Venyce, or otherwise called the Jewe of Venyce. Provided that yt bee not prynted by the said James Robertes without lycence first had from the Right honorable the lord Chamberlen."

The Lord Chamberlain was patron of the Company of actors to which Shakespeare belonged, and by whom the play was probably being acted at this time; and he seems to have protected their interests till 1600, in which year the First and Second Quarto editions of the play were published. In this year also (October 28th) the Second Quarto of Heyes was entered in the Stationers' Register "by consent of Master Robertes."

The title-page of the first Quarto is as follows:

"The Excellent History of the Merchant of Venice.  
With the extreme cruelty of Shylocke the Jew towards

the saide Merchant, in cutting a just pound of his flesh. And the obtaining of Portia, by the choyse of three Caskets; Written by W. Shakespeare. Printed by J. Roberts. 1600."

Herein we note "a just pound," which is quoted from the play (II. i. 327; see below), and proclaims the keen interest attached to an incident that was afterwards to call for volumes of dramatic comment.

The title-page of the other Quarto reads:

"The most Excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice. With the extreame crueltie of Shylocke the Jewe towards the sayd Merchant, in cutting a just pound of his flesh: and the obtayning of Portia, by the choyse of three chests. As it hath been diuers times acted by the Lord Chamberlaine his Seruants: Written by William Shakespeare. At London. Printed by I. R.— for Thomas Heyes . . . 1600."

Here we have "chests" instead of "caskets," but both words occur in the play.

This time (see "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*," p. 161) the Quarto printed by Roberts takes the lead; but again, neither appears to represent the author's MS.; nor is it easy to decide whether both were printed from the same or from different imperfect transcripts of the play. Still, the MS. of Heyes seems to have been longer in the possession of Shakespeare's Company, and some of the stage-directions give it a first-hand appearance.

The Third Quarto of 1637 is a reprint of the Second (Heyes), and the Fourth of 1652 was called for at a time when the Jews were endeavouring to regain their foothold in England.

The First Quarto (Roberts) is perhaps the best single authority for the text of the play, but the First Folio version was printed from the Heyes Quarto. As in the case of "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*," the best text is based on all these authorities.

With regard to the date of "The Merchant of Venice," we notice, first, that the play is mentioned by Meres in 1598 (see p. 22). In the same year it was entered on the Register of the Stationers' Company. Therefore, in some form it existed before 1598.

If the "Venesyon Comodey" of Henslowe may be trusted, it was a new play in 1594. In that year, moreover, Roderigo Lopez, a well-known Jew, chief physician to the Queen, was hanged at Tyburn. He had been accused of attempting to poison the Queen, as well as a Spanish refugee, Antonio Perez, popularly known as Don Antonio. The Spaniard was a Christian, and the occurrence renewed our national hostility to the Jews, and it may have found popular expression in Shakespeare's play; more especially as the same Dr. Lopez filled a place in a later edition of Marlowe's "Dr. Faustus." Further, "The Merchant of Venice" has links<sup>1</sup> with "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" (1592), and though in its present form it shows a marked advance on that earlier drama, and indeed in power and style and characterization comes very near to the best of the comedies, the earliest draft may well be assigned to the year 1594. Its apparent indebtedness to Silvan's "Orator," published in an English translation by Anthony Munday in 1596, is perhaps the chief item of evidence to bring forward in favour of that year; but possibly Shakespeare read Silvan in the French, and he might even have seen the English version in manuscript. My opinion, however, is that he used Silvan's French (or perhaps some earlier translation) when writing his play, and the English version of 1596 when revising it; on this use of original and translation I have commented elsewhere. In this instance the words (IV. i. 326-7) "if thou cut'st *more Or less than a just pound*" may be a later

<sup>1</sup> Importance of friendship in each, resemblance of Launcelot and Nerissa to Launce and Lucetta; and of the dialogue between Portia and Nerissa (I. ii.) and that between Juliet and Lucetta in I. ii. See also page 139.

interpolation; though an improvement, they may be removed without affecting the context; and thus we might account for the presence of the expression *more or less* and *a just*, which latter occurs two or three times in the Englished Silvan of 1596, and appears to be a mistranslation of "*justo pondere*" in an earlier Latin authority; though, of course, such an expression is found elsewhere in Shakespeare. Further, we have resemblances in "discharge," "a good round sum," and the like, which occur in both Silvan and "*The Merchant of Venice*."

Another item associated with 1596 is the play called "*Wily Beguiled*," which imitates the moonlight scene between Lorenzo and Jessica (V. i.), and the date of "*Wily Beguiled*" is about 1596-7. Also, the incident of a Jew whetting his knife occurs in "*Machiavellus*," a Latin play performed in Cambridge at Christmas, 1597. Finally, on this subject of date, I may repeat that the style of "*The Merchant of Venice*" points to a year somewhat later than 1594, nor do we find the more striking inequalities of workmanship that are often abundant in the early plays of Shakespeare; I may also repeat (see p. 57) that when the exact year is concealed from us, an approximate date, such as 1594 (or 1596) is not only all that we can expect, but also absolutely invaluable for our purposes of literary appreciation.

Not less valuable is the investigation to which we now proceed, that, namely, of the crude metals that were transmuted into the pure gold of this play by the poet's magic crucible; it is profoundly interesting and profoundly instructive to watch the great magician at his work, and as we may notice in the next section, "*The Merchant of Venice*" is an excellent example of Shakespeare's skill in this process of transmuting.

The main plot is a blending of two famous fables, which may be called the Bond story and the Casket story. The first of these, though of eastern origin, like so many of



the legends in Shakespeare, may owe something to the Roman law of The Twelve Tables, which sanctioned the maiming of debtors, and even safeguarded the creditor—"Si plus minusve secuerint, sine fraude esto"; we must add, however, that the penalty appears never to have been enforced—"dissectum esse antiquitus neminem equidem legi neque audivi." The story occurs frequently; it is found in the translation of the "*Cursor Mundi*," and in the "*Gesta Romanorum*"; but Shakespeare's authority was Ser Giovanni's "*Il Pecorone*," a collection of stories written or compiled about 1378, but not published till 1558. Shakespeare seems to have read the Italian (see p. 46), though he may also have consulted translations, none of which have come down to us. The poet of course modifies and enlarges upon his original; he substitutes the test of the caskets for the old conditions of wooing, adds Nerissa and Gratiano with their delightful parody of the love of Portia and Bassanio, and so forth.

Next we note the other versions of the Jew story. Stephen Gosson in his "*Schoole of Abuse*," 1579, mentions a play called "*The Jew*," which he commends as representing "the greedinesse of worldly chusers, and bloody mindes of Usurers"; in this lost play, as it appears, the bond and casket incidents are already combined. Again, in 1579, Spenser, writing to Gabriel Harvey, signs himself "He that is fast bounde vnto the in more obligations than any marchant in Italy to any Jewe there," which we may regard as a reference to the same lost play. Further, in the play the "*Three Ladies of London*," 1584, an Italian merchant, *Mercatore*, is prosecuted by a Jew, *Gerontus*, to recover a loan of "three thousand ducats for three months"—an incident that may have been interpolated from the "*Jew*" play above mentioned, or from some other contemporary drama. Here we may notice the prominence given to the word "*merchant*," also the name of the Jew, *Gerontus*; and further that the

loan and the time are the same as in "The Merchant of Venice"; and among minor resemblances we may compare the words of Gerontus: "Pay me the principal: as for the interest I forgive it you," with Shylock's "Give me my principal and let me go" (IV. i. 336).

The name "Gerontus" in the above now brings us to mention "A new Song, showing the crueltie of Gerontus, a Jewe, who in lending to a merchant an hundred crownes, would have a pound of his fleshe, because he could not pay him at the time appointed."

Of this ballad, which was "Imprinted at London for T. P.," we may say briefly that while it bears no trace whatever of Shakespeare's play,<sup>1</sup> there are in "The Merchant of Venice" some possible traces of the ballad; therefore, although the cast of its forty-one stanzas implies a date somewhat later than 1594, it may have been rewritten, and have been used by Shakespeare in some earlier form. Still it is not an important example of the sources of the poet's inspiration.

Much more important, and more interesting, is Marlowe's "The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta" (about 1589). But the influence of Marlowe is not so apparent as we might expect; there is less than usual of the earlier poet's style, and the general cast and tone of Shakespeare's play proclaim a splendid independence; though of course in the sketch of the central figure we trace the influence of Marlowe, sometimes in form, sometimes in colour; for example, this liveliest touch in the delineation of Shylock,

My daughter !—O my ducats ! O my daughter—

(it is more, however, than a mere touch, for we must add some dozen lines of the context, II. viii. 12-24,) this tragicomic and most characteristic conflict in the soul of

<sup>1</sup> Moreover, if we may judge from the first stanza, the inspiration of the ballad is derived from Italy—"as Italian writers tell,"

Shakespeare's Jew is reproduced almost verbatim from Marlowe:

O my girl,  
My gold, my fortune, my felicity ! . . .  
O girl ! O gold ! O beauty ! O my bliss !

But these resemblances are rare ; and not alone in the conception and the development of Shylock does Shakespeare far surpass the crude, if powerful, the half-monster if half-man creation known as Barabas :

I walk abroad a-nights,  
And kill sick people groaning under walls, etc.,

for his drama as a whole is a relieving contrast to "The Jew of Malta" rather than in any sense a reflection of that play. But we must do Marlowe justice—to compare any poet with Shakespeare is an injustice ; and we are bound to add that Marlowe's development of Barabas begins well, but degenerates into monstrosity and buffoonery, no doubt to please the rabble of an earlier theatre (cir. 1589), and in the texture of the play are passages that *may* be compared with Shakespeare ; for the above restriction with regard to comparison can often be removed when only a few lines are quoted from—let us hope—almost any poet ; and certainly in the case of Marlowe. Besides, Marlowe came first ; he had all the disadvantage of the pioneer ; for instance, as we saw above (p. 125), Shakespeare borrowed a good deal from Barabas when he cast—or recast—the crude villainy of Richard III ; and by this time his finer taste would avoid rather than copy Marlowe's monster.

We have yet to include among our list of possible suggestions for the Bond story the French work of Alexander Silvain, which has already been mentioned, as also its English version of 1596. In Declamation 95 of this volume we read : "Of a Jew, who would for his debt have a pound of the flesh of a Christian." The debt is 900 crowns payable within three months ; in the ballad, we

\* remember, it was "one hundred crownes" to be lent "for twelve month and a day." The passage in *Silvayn* which has the most direct bearing on the play (cf. III. i. 90-100) is as follows: "There are diuers others that are more cruell, which because they are in vse seeme nothing terrible at all: as to binde al the bodie vnto a most loathsome prison, or vnto an intollerable slauerie, where not only the whole bodie, but also al the sences and spirits are tormented. . . ."

Into the long history of the Caskets story it is needless for us to enter. Like the Bond story, it is a legend of antiquity, probably also of eastern origin. It commended itself to Gower and Boccaccio; but Shakespeare used one of the versions which found their way into the "*Gesta Romanorum*." The Emperor Ancelmus wishing to discover whether the daughter of the King of Naples is worthy to marry his son, makes her choose one of three caskets, gold, silver, and lead. The inscriptions on these caskets are much as in "*The Merchant of Venice*," though Shakespeare has transposed the first and second, and changed that on the leaden casket. It is further possible that he had access to a story in which the caskets were two in number, such as that told by Straparola (cf. "the contrary casket," I. II. 112.)

Whether Shakespeare adapted the legend to his play, or found it so adapted, is a matter of doubt; but the probability is that he worked upon some old drama in which the chief alterations were already effected.

As to the Lorenzo-Jessica episode or underplot, that may have been derived from the fourteenth Tale of Masuccio di Salerno (p. 168), in which the daughter of a miser elopes with her lover, and carries off her father's jewels. Although we have no record of any translation of the Italian, it is quite likely that Shakespeare made use of the story.

Finally, having regard to Shakespeare's methods as

exemplified in other plays, I should repeat that in writing his "Merchant of Venice" he almost certainly had before him an old drama which gave him considerable help both in respect to scheme and material, a drama that combined the Bond story and the Casket story; and further, but not with any such degree of probability, some hint of the Jessica-Lorenzo incidents may have been included.

We may be surprised at the intimate knowledge of Italy—apparently first-hand—which is displayed in "The Merchant of Venice," the "Taming of the Shrew," and some others. If Shakespeare did not visit Venice, we have in these plays a good example of his marvellous faculty of absorbing information.

The time of the play is: 1st day, I. (Interval, a week); 2nd day, II. i.-vii. (Interval, 1 day); 3rd day, II. viii. ix. (Interval); 4th day, III. i. (Interval, about a fortnight); 5th day, III. ii.-iv.; 6th, III. v.; IV.; 7th and 8th, V.

### *Critical Remarks.*

Not least among the marvels and the merits of Shakespeare's Romantic Drama is that grace beyond the reach of conventional dramatic art which blends different and, at times, incongruous elements of fable into one consummate unity of effect. In few, indeed, of these plays is the action "one and undivided"; but we are grateful to the genius of Shakespeare who more than any other dramatist created this delightful complexity within the required dramatic uniformity.

Nothing at first sight could appear less likely than that stories of distinct interest, such as these of the pound of flesh and the choice of caskets, could ever be harmoniously combined to form one main plot; and though the combination may in this instance have been effected in some early play, or suggested by it, we may rest assured that the art of Shakespeare wove them together afresh with a beauty and a truth quite unknown to the original; and it

is likely that the interweaving of yet a third story—the Jessica elopement—with these two, was Shakespeare's handiwork alone.

Next I should admire the lyric and idyllic charm that first supports and afterwards supplants a comic element in relieving the tragic intensity of the play, and brings us at the close to a scene of peace and beauty, where the silence is broken only by the music of earth as it beats time with the music of the spheres; I doubt whether a more successful tragic and idyllic contrast can be discovered in dramatic or any other literature.

Yet much of this is omitted on the stage (see p. 6), though in reality it unifies the plot, and merges into a finer harmony the note of sadness struck at the opening of the play; the sadness—partly <sup>1</sup> of friendship that must yield, and rightly yield, to love. And it has further been objected that the scene is opened by characters whose flippancy is strangely at variance with its idyllic elements. It would be easy, however, to show that this flippancy is more apparent than real, and that if the fitness of Lorenzo and Jessica to play their idyllic part be tested by quotations, the balance of these will be greatly in their favour. Ample qualification in themselves are the words of Jessica, "I am never merry when I hear sweet music," or those of Lorenzo, "The man that hath no music in himself, etc., etc."; souls like theirs by no means scorn the melting mood. The common sense, moreover, of Lorenzo is another qualification; it prevents sentiment from stealing too near to the border-ground of sentimentality, as where he diverts the legend of Medea (V. i. 12-14), and applies it to a more practical issue (cf. also III. v. 61-65).

As to the characters in the play, we begin with Shylock, on whom so much has been written; and it may be sufficient for the purpose of this manual if I call attention to two important considerations which have been either

<sup>1</sup> See I. i. 1, and II. i. 12; also Section 25 of this Chapter.

disregarded or lightly urged. Apart from drama, apart also from any question of his morality, Shakespeare's opinion of Shylock, Joan of Arc, and even of Malvolio, would differ at many points from a modern estimate of such characters, and it would contrast unfavourably with that estimate; if it were not so, the history of civilization and the ideal (see p. 166) would be a history of retrogression. Next, let us judge him from a contemporary standpoint. Here Shakespeare invariably shows to an astonishing advantage; but, as it happens, in this instance we have the unequivocal testimony of Marlowe's Jew; in this monster we recognize with a shudder what Shakespeare might have done; or we put the case thus: In view of his own sixteenth century estimate of long-standing popular prejudice, and of the clamour of the groundlings, he has been most temperate and most tolerant and true to the life in his delineation of the Jew.

One other point; chiefly to obviate difficulties involved in the Bond story, Shakespeare drew Shylock with some degree of ambiguity; if the Jew does not love his daughter ("Our house is hell," II. iii. 2), he seems to have loved his wife (III. i. 125-129). If he loves his ducats, he also loves his nation; if an oppressor, he is of the race of the oppressed; and so forth. Hence his character is difficult to determine, and perhaps more than any other in Shakespeare leaves room for difference of opinion.

From Shylock we turn, of course, to the other striking figure in the play—Portia. If we look at this figure as it is reflected on the pages of the commentator, we find it labelled "Intellect"; I should label it "one of the Julia, Viola, Rosalind series" of women (there are others, and, under other aspects, such as Beatrice) who assume

Such a habit  
That they shall think we are accomplished  
With that we lack.

(III. iv. 60-62.)

What this quotation means we may discover later. I must first point out that the word "intellect" as applied to such a character as Portia may lead to a total misunderstanding of Shakespeare's delightful creation; it connotes education, learning. Now Shakespeare's women are not learned; in spite of some apparent exceptions, they are not even educated, in our sense of the word. When Portia puts on the habit of a man, and therewithal as much else of man as her womanly nature for the nonce may carry, she reviews the situation with Nerissa :

I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two . . .  
And twenty of these puny lies I'll tell,  
That men shall swear I *have discontinued school*  
Above a twelvemonth.

(III. iv. 64 *sqq.*)

"School," we remember, was for men, not women; Portia was "an unlesson'd girl" (III. ii. 161), which means not, as is generally understood, "an uneducated girl," but, "a girl, *and therefore* uneducated"; education being one of the prerogatives of men that "we lack" (quotation above).

Certainly she could speak French, though not English; and she may have had some knowledge of Latin; so it appears from I, ii, 49-68; but here we are in the region of the ideal, for the context (69-75) allows her a colloquial knowledge of English. We therefore return to the general truth implied in the phrase "an unlesson'd girl," and we add a general truth akin to the former, that the women of Shakespeare dwell but in the suburbs of their lords' good pleasures, and are not mated to them in mind: "I know you wise, but yet no farther wise, than Harry Percy's wife" ("I Henry IV," II. iii. 110-111). Let us therefore assign to Portia common-sense—the faculty, as I have remarked, possessed by the few, of rightly applying the truths that are obvious to all—let us assign to her intelligence, readiness of resource, tact—anything but educa-



tion. In the trial scene her wit was her own—her arguments were Bellario's.

But I will anticipate an objection; I shall be told that the everyday speech of Portia is full of wisdom—education; I answer yes; again this is the dramatic ideal; Portia is one with her dramatic kind—even with her inferiors; if Portia says “good sentences” so does Nerissa—“They are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing”; if Portia has the aesthetic faculty—the faculty of realizing and harmonizing with the exquisite fitness of things: “Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day,” so has Nerissa—“Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.” Or again, in regard to ideal information, if Portia can talk of Sibylla and Diana, Jessica will adorn her speech with Thisbe and Medea and Old Jason.

Undoubtedly the high fashion of speech in that day was interlarded with ink-horn terms, and the Queen set an example of book-learning which found imitators; and we read in Ascham and others that learned women were not unknown; for all that, the education of women was the exception, not the rule. During the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth, a large number of schools were founded in England, but not one of these, so far as I am aware, was open to women.

And, strange as it may seem, the situation was not without its aesthetic—perhaps also its moral—advantages. As we have seen, and as the dramatist well knew, this conventional “lack” of education contributed greatly to dramatic effect when women played the part of men; moreover, “men hated learned women,” and with some sort of justice: “Could we make her as the man, Sweet love were slain”; and learning has at least a tendency to “make her as the man.” And thus it comes about that the women of Shakespeare represent the ideal stage of their development; the dark Middle Age is behind them; the glaring,

the "Understanding Age" is in front of them; they are neither the slaves nor the apes of man. We may now understand the words I have written in another part of this volume (Chapter VII), "Love is a diapason that closes full in Shakespeare."

But I should wrong both Shakespeare and my readers if I thus closed my estimate of Portia; she is a type, and before I dismiss the character I must revert to the fundamental principle of Shakespearean criticism which recognizes that to Shakespeare the only light of every truth was its contrasting error, and that his ethics and aesthetics were not a birth but a growth. Therefore, as in our review of "Romeo and Juliet," we look forward some fifteen to twenty years, and place Miranda by the side of Portia. And now we discover that the conventional "unlesson'd girl" could not wholly satisfy the moral or the artistic conscience of Shakespeare, but that he pursued his quest of the ideal until the vision of the perfect woman was revealed to him, a woman no longer "unschool'd" ("Merchant of Venice," III. ii. 159), but educated by her learned father from her tenderest years, till he would proudly assert of her, "Here have I, thy *schoolmaster*, made thee more profit Than other princess can, that have more time For vainer hours" ("The Tempest," I. ii. 171-174). And I repeat that nothing good can be said about any of the heroines of Shakespeare *unless it has reference to the whole process of their evolution*, and keeps ever in view the womanly perfections that culminate in the astonishing ideal of Miranda.

As "The Merchant of Venice" gives us the first striking evidence of Shakespeare's extraordinary power of bestowing an unimpeachable and fascinating individuality on ideal reproductions of our human life, I will add one or two short notes on the remaining characters. Antonio may possibly be an early essay in Aristotle's ideal subject of tragedy (see Chapter VIII)—the man of noble nature

with a flaw—*quæria*—in it; “Roman honour” it may be, or too easy prosperity, or some indiscretion of contemptuous intolerance; and then Shylock is his Nemesis; but this intention of the dramatist is by no means pronounced. Otherwise, Antonio develops the idea of friendship as we find it in “The Two Gentlemen of Verona.” Launcelot Gobbo, moreover, is a worthy descendant of Launce in the same play. Bassanio is probably underdrawn out of deference to the highly-wrought figure of Portia. Gratiano is the character so often and so admirably introduced into the plays of Shakespeare in order to supply the elements of humour, reality, dramatic relief; possibly also by his coarseness he gives some finer grace to Bassanio, and even to Lorenzo; and Nerissa (we might add Jessica), as noticed elsewhere, is another familiar figure—the counterpart, in some aspects, of the leading female personage, and in some aspects a contrast. I may add that the three pairs of lovers are delightfully differentiated; for the love-making of Lorenzo and Jessica is as light-hearted as that of Bassanio and Portia is serious; and the gay good humour of Gratiano and Nerissa by no means deserts them in the delicate business of wooing.

But not only in characterization is “The Merchant of Venice” an index of Shakespeare’s rapidly advancing mastery over his highly complex art; his progress is as plainly marked in every other department of the dramatic technique of the play. The manner in which his three stories are interlaced by the single thread of the fortunes of Bassanio is in itself a master stroke of dramatic construction; but not content with this, Shakespeare adds yet a fourth episode—that of the rings—and brings all four together in a central point of interest which coincides exactly with the centre of his play (III. ii. 177-292), where we gaze from the height of bliss into bottomless depths of despair. Equally striking and successful is his management of the catastrophe—Portia’s subtle and slow whetting

of the monster's teeth, so that her "Tarry a little" (IV. i. 302) may smite him with a tenfold dismay; the superb effects of irony—"A Daniel come to judgement" (see also IV. i. 280-292); the uses of the Lorenzo-Jessica episode in developing the character of Shylock and helping to bridge the gap of three months between the signing of the bond and its expiration; these and many another are among the triumphs of dramatic art which are now so familiar to us that they cease to surprise. Indeed there are found critics who complain that "The Merchant of Venice" suffers from lack of plausibility; the stories, they assert, are too improbable to form the groundwork of a drama. Certainly the stories are absurd, and, from some points of view, the casket incident is scarcely less revolting than that of the pound of flesh, inasmuch as the fortunes of two human beings are to be imperilled by the caprice of a father. But although I am convinced that the genius of Shakespeare has surmounted these inherent difficulties, and given a charming actuality to the play as a whole, the objection is real and general enough to merit a brief examination.

I may begin by remarking that such a play as "The Merchant of Venice" gains something in this connection when put on the boards of a theatre; in the library we have more leisure to dwell on our critical doubts; but whether read or acted it contains nothing that is repulsive or absurd; the ideal is built on the wrecks of the real, and with those wrecks art is not greatly concerned. We have before us a landscape; to the artist eye it presents a scene of loveliness; to another attitude of mind it is merely a record of geologic upheaval and ruin. So is it with the landscapes of Shakespeare; look beneath their surface and you discover the ruin, but it was never intended that you should. Yet the ruin itself was purposeful, and therefore plausible; and in fact we have to consider two aspects of the pound of flesh story. The Roman

law, as we noticed above (p. 198) provided against the initial difficulty of enforcing such a penalty, which becomes absurd only when a progressive morality has left it far behind; and Shakespeare merely points to the truth that a later and higher civilization altogether condemns such "wild justice," and makes it impracticable; and he further reminds us that if any attempt is made to revive the methods of a barbarous age, that attempt must be roughly put down. With the casket story he does just the opposite; here again is a relic of "wild justice," including, however, such an element of moral progress—"Ne jugez jamais sur les apparences"—that it is perfectly admissible in drama, if only as a parable.

Next, the associated, the ideal aspect; all these legends are more or less impossible; bond story or casket story or Forest of Arden, it is merely a difference of degree; nay, from the very line of blank verse to the five acts of a drama it is merely a difference of degree; and when we enter the regions of the ideal, we must obey the laws by which that region is governed.

And, finally; among these laws is the sanction of antiquity; this alone will often make a legend a fit subject for dramatic treatment, and even lend a charm to old barbarity and license.

(21) "KING HENRY THE FOURTH," PARTS I AND II,  
1597-8

*Historical Particulars*

In 1597 the following entry was made in the Stationers' Registers: "Andrew Wyse. XXV<sup>th</sup> die Februarij. Entred for his Copie vnder thandes of Master Dix: and Master Warden *Man*, a booke intituled The historye of Henry the iij<sup>th</sup> with his battaile of Shrewsburye against Henry Hottspurre of the Northe with the conceipted mirthe of Sir John Falstoff vj<sup>d</sup>." This was followed in 1598 by a

quarto volume entitled "The History of Henrie the Fourth: With the battell at Shrewsburie, betweene the King and Lord Henry Percy, surnamed Henrie Hotspur of the North. With the humorous conceits of Sir John Falstallffe. At London. Printed by P. S. for Andrew Wise . . . 1598." No less than five other quartos were printed before the Folio of 1623, where it is styled "The First Part of Henry the Fourth, with the Life & Death of Henry Sirnamed Hot-spurre." The Second Part was registered on August 23rd, 1600; it was published the same year in a Quarto volume entitled, "The Second Part of Henrie the fourth, continuing to his death, and coronation of Henrie the fift. With the humours of Sir John Fal-staffe, and swaggering Pistoll. As it hath been sundrie times publicly acted by the right honourable, the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants. *Written by William Shakespeare.* London. Printed by V. S. [Valentine Sims] for Andrew Wise, and William Apsley. 1600." It was not again printed till it appeared in the Folio of 1623, where it is entitled "The Second Part of Henry the Fourth, Containing his Death: & the Coronation of King Henry the Fift."

The Folio version of the First Part is substantially that of the Quartos, but the Second Part is considerably improved and enlarged. In both cases the usual changes are made which tend to efface or soften down expressions that were considered profane.

It is unlikely that both parts were written before the entry of the First in the Stationers' Registers, although "Falstaff" was originally "Oldcastle," and the name "Old" appears by mistake in the First Quarto of the Second Part. But that Shakespeare changed the name of his famous knight is apparent from the play on the word "Oldcastle" in "my old lad of the castle" (Part I., I. ii. 47), or from such an unmetrical line as "Away, good Ned, Falstaff sweats to death" (Part I., II. ii. 115). The fact is further evident from the apology in the Epilogue to the

Second Part, and from allusions by contemporaries. That Oldcastle was "page to the Duke of Norfolk" (Part II. III. ii. 27), is of less importance, because Falstaff (*i.e.* Fastolf) was also in the service of the Duke.

We read in "Henslow's Diary," under date October 16th, 1599, that he paid "for The first part of the Lyfe of Sir Jhon Ouldcastell, and in earnest of the Second Pte, for the use of the company, ten pound." This play was called up partly, as we may believe, by Shakespeare's Oldcastle, partly by the contemporary fame of this character who appears, for instance, in "The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth" (see below); and in the Prologue to "Sir John Olcastle" (Section 42 of this chapter), we find these lines: "It is no pampered glutton we present Nor aged counsellor to youthful sin." This reads like a sneering reference to Shakespeare's "Henry IV"; and we must add the well-known passage in the Epilogue (see next Section) that closes the Second Part of his drama: "If you be not too much cloyed with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story with sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katharine of France; where for anything I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat, unless already he be killed with your hard opinion; for Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man." From this we infer that Shakespeare had taken the name Oldcastle, perhaps also the rough idea of Falstaff, from "The Famous Victories," or some play unknown to us; and that in deference to political, religious, and yet other considerations, he changed the name Oldcastle to Falstaff. Possibly Shakespeare had not reflected that Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, was the great leader of the Puritans; certainly he had no wish to offend the Puritan<sup>1</sup> (see Chapter VII) or to favour the Catholic. The new name, Sir John Falstaff, was selected

<sup>1</sup> I do not think that the words of Falstaff "Well . . . Eastcheap" in I. ii. 170-176, are a taunt against Puritanism, though, of course, that is possible.

for two reasons; for the "Sir John," and for that knight's "kind of alacrity" in running away. Naturally, therefore, Shakespeare reverted to his— or his coadjutor's—Sir John Fastolf of the First Part of "Henry VI," who was qualified in both these respects, was connected with a certain Boar's Head Tavern, and whose name had already been variously printed as Falstaff, Fastalf, etc.; and it appears as *Falstaffe* in "I. Henry VI" (1623 Folio edition). Unfortunately, as Shakespeare must have known from Holinshed, the charge of cowardice against Sir John Fastolf, which served as doubtful dramatic material in "I. Henry VI," was untrue; and his substitution of "Falstaff" for "Oldcastle" was the occasion of new protests.

Here we may quote Fuller ("Worthies," 1662): "The stage has been over bold with his (Sir John Fastolfe's) memory, making him a Thrasonical puff, and emblem of mock valour. True it is, Sir John Oldcastle did first bear the brunt of the one, being made the makesport in all plays for a coward. . . . Now, as I am glad that Sir John Oldcastle is put out, so I am sorry that Sir John Fastolfe is put in, to relieve his memory in this base service, to be the anvil for every dull wit to strike upon. Nor is our comedian excusable, by some alteration of his name, writing him Sir John *Falstafe*, . . . few do heed the inconsiderable difference of spelling of their name."

Resuming the question of date, we infer that both parts of "Henry IV" were written before 1599; further, the play of "Henry IV" is mentioned by Meres, 1598, and Justice Silence and Sir John Falstaff are alluded to in Jonson's "Every Man out of His Humour," 1598. An upward limit of date for the two parts, which Shakespeare may have written continuously, might be 1596, the year in which, I believe, he produced or revised his "King John." It is worth noting that Meres (see p. 23), who quotes from Part I, speaks of "Henry IV" as a tragedy, which seems, though this is disputed, to include Part II; and it



may be added that the First Part contains two or three allusions to events of the year 1596.

Shakespeare's authority for this drama was Holinshed, aided by the old play already mentioned, possibly also by another no longer extant, on the subject, let us presume, of Sir John Oldcastle. The other, "The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth," is extant; it was probably the motive of Shakespeare's great trilogy,<sup>1</sup> the two parts of "Henry IV," with "Henry V"; for the ideal King and Englishman is the chief actor in all these three plays. Indeed, he is mentioned more than once, and with peculiar power, in the "Trilogy of Henry the Sixth," and Shakespeare makes rather than takes an opportunity of presenting him to us in a characteristic attitude in his play of "Richard the Second." (See Section 14 of this chapter.)

"The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth," by an unknown writer, was on the stage before 1588, for Tarleton who played the clown in the piece died in that year. It is a worthless production; its comedy is buffoonery, and its tragedy stupidity; yet it was popular on account of the subject. As we have seen, it gave Shakespeare Oldcastle—a miserable profligate with a share of less than thirty lines in the piece; and Ned and Tom, his companions, are of like character. Even the Prince in this play is little better than a ruffian and a blackguard, and though he supplies Shakespeare with some useful hints,<sup>2</sup> the poet

<sup>1</sup> A trilogy after the Greek model may be effected by the three dramas, Richard II, Henry IV (two parts as one), and Henry V; but this, as I think, was farther from Shakespeare's intention. I use the word "trilogy," here and elsewhere, in a conventional modern sense.

<sup>2</sup> *Henry*. Here's such ado now-a-days, here's prisoning, here's hanging, whipping, and the devil and all. but I tell you, sirs, when I am king, we will have no such thing, but, my lads, if the old king my father were dead, we would be all kings.

*Oldcastle*. He is a good old man. God take him to his mercy the sooner.

*Henry*. But Ned, so soon as I am king, the first thing I will do, shall be

drew much more from Holinshed and tradition. But of this we shall speak more fully when we reach the reign of "Henry the Fifth." We have traced the history of Falstaff, and a few words may now be said about others of the characters and their antecedents. "In the muster-roll of artillerymen serving under Humphrey Fitz-Allan, Earl of Arundel, at the siege of St. Laurens des Mortier, dated November 11th, 1435, appear the names of R. Bardoulff and Will Pistail."<sup>1</sup> Could this pair have been kept together in the pages of story or drama until the time came for Shakespeare to make them immortal? "Piston" who is found in "Soliman and Perseda,"<sup>2</sup> 1592, plays a part not unlike that of Shakespeare's Pistol. Justice Shallow must not be regarded as a reflection of Sir Thomas Lucy, although in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," he is temporarily associated with the knight of Shakespeare's deer-stealing adventure (p. 17). Mrs. Quickly has a various career; in the "First Part of Henry IV" she is wife of the host of the Boar's Head; in the Second Part she is a widow, and hostess of a tavern in Eastcheap; in "Henry V" she is the wife of Pistol; and in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" she retains nothing of her former self but the name.

The historic facts of the play may be left to the historian; and this remark will apply to all the Histories of Shakespeare. Nor can the poet's treatment of these facts be followed in every particular; we may only say generally that Shakespeare's faculty of idealizing is often consummate; that while liberally employing the methods of

to put my Lord Chief Justice out of office, and thou shalt be my Lord Chief Justice of England.

*Ved.* Shall I be Lord Chief Justice? By God's wounds I'll be the bravest Lord Chief Justice that ever was in England.

This extract from the "Famous Victories" may be compared with 1 Hen. IV, I. ii. 64-73.

<sup>1</sup> Willis, "Current Notes," May, 1856, p. 44 (Wheatley).

<sup>2</sup> Another character of this play, "Basilisco," is mentioned in "King John" (I. 244), Pistol has something of both these characters.

addition, exclusion, and arrangement, he mostly avoids glaring inaccuracies, and secures verisimilitude. It is no discredit to his drama that Henry IV laments his "old limbs"; that Hotspur, who fought at Otterburne in 1388, is represented as "young Harry Percy"; that the revolt of Scroop (1405), and the rising of Northumberland (1408), and the death of Glendower (1415), are dramatically almost contemporaneous; that Prince Hal performs many exploits unknown to history; nor indeed that the very errors of Holinshed are faithfully reproduced. (See also Chapter VIII.)

As regards the dramatic time of the action, the results of Mr. Daniel's analysis are as follow: the First Part covers a period of about three months, comprising ten "historic" days, with three extra "Falstaffian" days, and intervals:—1st day, I. i. (interval); 2nd day, I. iii. (interval); 3rd day, II. iii. (interval); 4th day, III. i.; 5th day, III. ii.; 6th day, III. iii. (interval); 7th day, IV. i. (interval); 8th day, IV. ii.; 9th day, IV. iii. iv.; 10th day, V. i.-v. Falstaffian days:—1st day, I. ii.; 2nd day, II. i. ii. and iv.; 3rd day, II. iv.; III. ii. Part II. comprises about two months, including nine historic days, three extra Falstaffian days, and intervals: 1st day, I. i. (interval); 2nd day, I. iii. and II. iii. (interval); 3rd day, III. i. (interval); 4th day, III. ii. (interval); 5th day, IV. i.-iii. (interval); 6th day, IV. iv. v.; 7th day, V. ii. (interval); 8th day, V. iv.; 9th day, V. v. Falstaffian days: 1st day, I. ii.; 2nd day, II. i. ii. iv.; 3rd day, V. i. and iii.

### *Critical Remarks*

In the "Troublesome Raigne of King John" Shakespeare had come upon a rough blending of comedy with history; he did not disdain the suggestion, but in writing his "King John" he made the blend much finer. Again, in the "Famous Victories" he found the comic element largely increased; once more he took the hint, and ran a

comedy parallel with his next history—both parts of it—and he conducted his prince to the *denouement* along this or that line of action, as it best served his purpose; that purpose was to use Falstaff both as a means of exhibiting in the way of drama the “courses vain” of the Prince’s “youth” (“Henry V,” I. i. 24, 54), and also as a foil whereby the future ideal king should always “stick fiery off.” Then when his Prince had thrown off his more or less assumed wildness (Section 23), and the demands of history became more imperative, the poet again reduced the comic element; or rather, at the bidding of the Queen it was detached in a separate play, “The Merry Wives of Windsor”; and then in “Henry V,” humour bowed before pathos by the deathbed of Falstaff.

Yet even in “Henry IV” Shakespeare does fair justice to the facts or the fictions of history; we have no reason to complain of any excess of the comic element, but rather to welcome it; even if it disfigured or overshadowed the history, we might well pardon it as being the very finest of its kind; but it does not; there was little that might be called heroic in the ruling sovereign, there was no Agincourt in his reign. Yet the personality and the career of Harry Percy are splendidly exhibited, although these, of course, are again a magnificent foil for Shakespeare’s favourite hero.<sup>1</sup>

Of the character of this hero as he passes through these scenes of mirth or grandeur, and gives them a delightful unity, I shall say nothing here; it will be discussed in my review of the play which bears his name. Nor of Falstaff—let us hope—is there anything new to be said, unless the few words allotted to him in the review above men-

<sup>1</sup> For example, we clearly understand that the conduct and the ambition of Hotspur are marred by selfishness, whereas those of Henry V spring from good humour, kindness, and a desire of the general good. Further, though each of the three great characters in the drama plays his part in defying convention, only of the Prince must it be said with fullest assurance that he left the world better than he found it. For Lady Percy see Section 23.

tioned contain a chance suggestion ; here I will take it for granted that we recognize in this most wonderful of all the creations of comedy the effect of contrasts most subtly blended ; for such are Falstaff's wit, humour, good temper, and ready resource, that we are compelled to forget or forgive both his defects and his faults, his age or his corpulence, his lying or his cowardice.<sup>1</sup>

## (22) THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR, 1598

### *Historical Particulars*

We begin by reading the epilogue to the "Second Part of King Henry IV"; from this we might suppose that Shakespeare at first intended to write his "Henry V" on the model of "Henry IV," adding French material to the comic element that was already so popular. But this epilogue is apart from the spirit of the play, where we are told ("2 Henry IV," V. v. 104-7) that Henry

Hath intent his wonted followers  
Shall all be very well provided for ;  
But all are banish'd till their conversations  
Appear more wise and modest to the world.

Again we read (V. v. 51-75), "being awaked, I do despise my dream. . . . I have turn'd away my former self. . . . I banish thee, on pain of death, As I have done the rest of my misleaders, Not to come near our person by ten mile. . . . And, as we hear you do reform yourselves, We will, according to your strengths and qualities Give you

<sup>1</sup> We need not, as some would do, attempt to prove that he was not a coward by referring to the remark of Poins, "if he fight longer than he sees reason" (1 Henry IV, 1. ii. 208) ; if we take from Falstaff cowardice, lying, knavery, meanness, indecency, stupidity and the rest, there is none of him left ; for with these we take also their blended contrasts of bravery, honour, straightforwardness, dignity, morality. And this is one reason why we are always more inclined to laugh with Falstaff than at him ; indeed, like his rivals, Panurge, Sancho Panza—Don Quixote himself—he smiles away many of the follies of an age or a régime. Falstaff is again noticed in Sections 22 and 23.

advancement. . . .," and from these words of Henry himself we may gather that Shakespeare at one time projected his "Henry V" pretty much as we have it, but omitting Falstaff altogether.

Indeed, those parts of "Henry V" that are concerned with the episode of Falstaff's death (II. i. 85-93, 122-134, and II. iii.), have all the appearance of interpolations;<sup>1</sup> and Shakespeare must have been aware that the fat knight had somewhat overplayed his part of laughing away the youthful indiscretions of the Prince; and he was doubtless determined that the humour of Falstaff's successor, Fluellen, should have its root not in a droll defect, but in an equally droll excess of regard for truth and honour.

The Epilogue, ~~therefore~~, that closes the "Second Part of Henry IV," and was written as it seems by another hand than Shakespeare's,—*"What I have to say is of my own making,"*<sup>2</sup> must be read between the lines; the writer, let us say, had some access to Shakespeare's confidence, but wrote without his authority. Further, the reference to the Queen at the close, though not without its conventional aspect, may imply that her Majesty had taken some special interest in the play and its performance.

This leads us to mention an interesting and important tradition. In his dedicatory epistle to *"The Comical Gallant,"* 1602, John Dennis writes of *"The Merry Wives of Windsor,"*—"I knew very well that it had pleased one of the greatest queens that ever was in the world. . . . This comedy was written at her command, and by her direction, and she was so eager to see it acted, that she commanded it to be finished in fourteen days; and was afterwards, as tradition tells us, very well pleased at the representation."

<sup>1</sup> Possibly Sir John Fastolf himself was present in an earlier draft of the play.

<sup>2</sup> Note also the un-Shakespearian reference to Oldcastle

Next, Johnson writes,<sup>1</sup> "there is a tradition preserved by Mr. Rowe, that it was written at the command of Queen Elizabeth, who was so delighted with the character of Falstaff, that she wished it to be diffused through more plays, but suspecting that it might pall by continued uniformity, directed the poet to diversify his manner by showing him in love."

Again, Gildon ("Remarks on the Plays of Shakespeare," 1710) says, "The fairies in the fifth act make a handsome compliment to the queen, in her palace of Windsor, who had obliged him to write a play of Sir John Falstaff in love, and which I am very well assured he performed in a fortnight; a prodigious thing when all is so well contrived, and carried on without the least confusion."

We are now possessed of data that may enable us to watch the dramatist in his workshop at the close of the year 1597; he has recently finished the "Second Part of Henry IV," and will turn his attention to his unfinished drama of "Henry V," which he had begun two or three years before. This he may as well complete at once, and with this the great historic trilogy; nor without losing sight of his more serious dramatic aim as expressed in "Henry IV." For Henry V is to be his model king, a fitting climax to a long series of studies in kingly failure and national disunion; and no other consideration shall be allowed to modify this moral and artistic purpose of creating ideal national history along with ideal kingship. Falstaff, who has been a little overdone, must be dismissed, or if retained, serve as the merest necessary art-link between "Henry V" and the two plays preceding. At the same time the interests of the theatre shall not be neglected; the management, if they care to, can supply an Epilogue to "Henry IV," which shall include mention

<sup>1</sup> Rowe's words are: "She was so well pleased with that admirable character of Falstaff, in the two parts of 'Henry IV,' that she commanded him to continue it for one play more, and to show him in love."

of "Henry V" and of Falstaff; possibly also of a comic French element—something that shall draw an audience. And as to her Majesty's gracious pleasure, that shall be provided for in a matter of some two or three weeks; he will take one of the many comedies he has on the stocks—"The Merry Wives of Windsor," which he began years before, and outlined in prose; Falstaff shall replace the central figure, Garmombles;<sup>1</sup> if the place does not quite fit the man, he must try to fit the man to the place. However, he can hardly be expected to create an entirely new drama, nor allow a queen's whim—mere task work—to possess his soul (Section 23); he will throw it off quickly keeping mostly to the prose; and the subject—Falstaff in love—Falstaff the reformed—impossible! Falstaff, who "has the passions of an animal and the wit of a man" (Taine). Well, Falstaff will show to poor advantage anyway if he takes the place of Garmombles. Still, if her Majesty will have it so, it must be done, at whatever expense to his original conception of the "best good fellow of the Prince, and the best Prince of good fellows"; at the worst he may venture to teach that heartless great personage a lesson, her and her whole court of sycophants; it will be no affair of his if the Falstaff who has made them merry and won their love shall become little better than the caricature of his former self. After all, the end will try the man; he shall die in the next drama, "Henry V," and death will restore him to his place in the hearts of any who may have seen him baffled, beaten, and degraded in "The Merry Wives." Something like this, we may say, was Shakespeare's difficult position, and something like these the means he adopted to extricate himself.

There are critics, however, who place "Henry V" before

<sup>1</sup> The connection of Mumpellgart with Windsor dates from 1592. The Queen calls him "Our cousin Mumpellgart"; and in the Quarto he appears as "cosen garmombles." See also p. 223.



"Merry Wives" in point of date; but their arguments, I think, have little to support them. The dates of piratical publication ("Henry V.," Q. 1600; "Merry Wives," Q. 1602), cannot be trusted; and the fact that Nym is mentioned on the title-page of "Merry Wives" need not imply that he has appeared already in "Henry V"; Corporal Nym (who may have annexed himself to Falstaff in "2 Henry IV") is a new character created to ridicule the fashionable and fantastic use of the word "humour," and he will appear again in "Henry V." On the other hand, evidence of the earlier date for "Merry Wives" (viz., 1598, and for "Henry V.," 1599), is much more convincing; besides that already mentioned, we have to notice that in III. ii. 73, we read, "he kept company with the wild Prince and Poins," and this reference to "Henry IV" ignores an intervening "Henry V." That no such play intervened is still more evident from a passage in the Quarto (omitted in the Folio): "He lay my life the mad Prince of Wales Is stealing his fathers Deare." Again, Pistol, who at II. ii. 22, is dismissed by the Quarto, is not so treated in the Folio; he remains most inappropriately to tell us in lines 142-3, that dame Quickly is his prize, and that we shall find him a married man in "Henry V." Again, the scene is at Windsor, and the royal surroundings of the play are in keeping with the royal wish; so, indeed, are the evident marks of haste and the general uncertainties or carelessness of composition.

Further, the play seems to have been written, or finished off in the early spring of 1598, for all the circumstances point to that season—"Take heed, ere summer comes, or cuckoo birds do sing," "raw rheumatic day," "Jack-a-Lent," and so forth.

As to the source of the play, beyond the stories described below (Critical Remarks), we may mention Reginald Scot's "Discoverie of Witchcraft" (1584) which Shakespeare

consulted when writing his "Midsummer Night's Dream." Some slight resemblances may be noted to Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour," which was written about the same time as "The Merry Wives of Windsor"; but the dates of each are too uncertain to warrant us in using the word "borrowing," and in the next division of this section I draw some comparison between the two dramatists.

Shakespeare must have had an intimate acquaintance with Windsor and its neighbourhood, and, as usual, he is familiar with the ways of Court life. How often in his plays we meet with a suggestion of foreign ambassadors or notables who visit England. Here we have Count Mumpellgart, of whom some account is given in the next division. "Our cousin Mumpellgart," as Elizabeth called him (p. 221), seems to have offended her Majesty, possibly by his persistent anxiety to obtain the Order of the Garter; she reluctantly allowed his election in 1597, and the title was conferred by James in 1603.

As to the Windsor names and scenes, most of these have been identified by critical explorers, and even the houses of the Pages and the Fords were known to tradition. "Tell him my name is Brook," said Ford, "only for a jest" (the association is obvious). However, by 1623, "Brooke" changes to "Broome"; some people, we may suppose, refused Shakespeare's offer of immortality. So also "Aunt Gillian of Brainford," in the Quartos (who figures in the lost play, "Friar Fox and Gillian of Brentford," 1592), becomes "Mother Prat" in the Folio. So also the allusions to Mumpellgart are less incriminating in the later editions, and "garmombles" is changed in the Folio to "cozen-germans"; for, as we have mentioned, James I did the German count some honour.

Of Justice Shallow and Silence, and the other characters who made their first appearance—in some guise or other—in "Henry IV," I must refer to my review of that

play; and the deer-stealing incident, wherein Shallow represents Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote, has been discussed in Chapter III, pages 16 and 17.

The only reliable text of the play is that of the Folio of 1623. Incidentally I have mentioned the Quarto of 1602; it has a long title-page, "A most pleasaunt and excellent conceited Comedie of Syr *John Falstaffe*, and the Merrie Wiues of *Windsor*. Entermixed with sundrie variable and pleasing humors, of Syr *Hugh* the Welch knight, Justice *Shallow*, and his wise Cousin M. Slender. With the swaggering vaine of Auncient *Pistoll* and Corporall Nym. By *William Shakespeare*. As it hath been diuers times Acted by the right Honorable my Lord Chamberlaines seruants. Both before her Maiestie and elsewhere. LONDON. Printed by T. C. for Arthur Johnson, and are to be sold at his shop in Powles Church Yard, at the Seigne of the Flower de Leuse and the Crowne: 1602."

This Quarto is doubtless one of those "surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of incurious impostors that expos'd them," which were often an imperfect reproduction of a shortened acting copy (see pp. 56 and 57); it omits the allusion to Sir Thomas Lucy, and is almost worthless as a representative of the play; yet it contains matter that was interesting to the student. It was reprinted in 1619. Another Quarto edition, published in 1630, is a slightly modernized reprint of the First Folio text.

The Stationers' Registers notice of "Merry Wives" is dated January 18th, 1601-2, and the book is entered by John Busby, whose name appears on the surreptitious "Henry V" Quarto (see next section).

The Time Analysis is: 1st day, I. i.-iv. 2nd day, II. i.-iii.; III. i.-iv, and the *Quickly* portion of v. 3rd day, The *Ford* portion of III. v.; also IV.—end of Play.

*Critical Remarks*

The "Merry Wives of Windsor" does not rank high among the dramas of Shakespeare; and we cannot help feeling a little depressed at the unrelieved discomfitures of Falstaff. On this account I am inclined to regard the play as a most striking illustration of the power and the versatility of Shakespeare's genius. And this the more if, as we may reasonably suppose, the piece was produced in haste, and with some impatience both of the task and the subject.

But if the vivid imagination, the ready wit, and all that appertains to the indefinable gift of genius is strikingly displayed, the comedy will fill us with scarcely less astonishment as we recognize the writer's mastery of material, especially of contemporary literature, and his intimate acquaintance with contemporary life.

But I will support these general reflections with a few illustrative particulars; let us compare Shakespeare with his contemporaries; where in Ben Jonson, for example, could we find such marvellous inventiveness of mere vocabulary and phrase, especially in dialogue; this alone places Shakespeare above all contemporary dramatists. Or his wit—again there is nothing at all like it in Ben Jonson, spite of clever interweaving of Horace, Juvenal, and the rest; or his realism—" [*Aside to her.*] Speak louder"<sup>1</sup> (IV. ii. 16, 17); there is little enough of this in Ben Jonson. And, of course, his imagery—"till I were as crestfallen as a dried pear"; there is less of this in Ben Jonson. All these are minor matters, but they are enough for my purpose, and I proceed to make a brief comparison with the efforts of Shakespeare's successors. Now, these successors have a great advantage; dialogue is almost finally developed, and so forth; yet, with the exception of Goldsmith, and possibly of Sheridan, I have read nothing

<sup>1</sup> Omitted in the Quarto.

in English comedy that even at this distance of time could be named with Shakespeare's "Merry Wives"; "named with" is not the expression, "named after" is doubtful, because, finally, taking our impression of the play as a whole, we find it difficult, if not impossible, to call to mind anything at all like it out of Shakespeare

To this we add a quality that is not always recognized as essential to imaginative writing, yet it is most essential, if I rightly define the ideal as progressive morality grown in the gardens of art (p 174), for in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" we discover a morality ideally pure as Spenser's, and even more ideal in its purity, if only by contrast with the conventional coarseness of its setting

I trust I may be pardoned for a digression which is made, as I stated above, chiefly because the play before us is not fairly representative of Shakespeare's genius

"Produced in haste and with some impatience both of the task and the subject," this is at least partly true, but I find it hard to believe that Shakespeare constructed his comedy in two weeks—or indeed in two months. No doubt he had always—or nearly always—more than one drama on the stocks. He sketched outlines as he chanced upon this or that old play—Italian mostly—or old romance, and sometimes, as with his "Tempest" and some others, he inwove a contemporary theme. And if, as I believe, he thus adapted the subject imposed by the Queen to the outlines of a play already in hand, the difficulty of the fortnight is disposed of

Assuming the existence of an unfinished draft of "The Merry Wives of Windsor," we might perhaps conjecture that it already included within its scheme a contemporary incident, that, namely, of the visit to Windsor in 1592 of the German Count Mumpellgart—the Garmombles of the Quarto (p 221). This visit, and other incidents of his stay in England, and his subsequent relations with the Queen, made him a fair butt for the shafts of Shake-

speare's wit; and granting such a leading character in the play, supplanted later by Falstaff, we explain some apparent enigmas and inconsistencies. As Johnson himself noticed, "The action begins and ends often before the conclusion, and the different parts might change places without inconvenience." To this we add the strange part assigned to Mrs. Quickly, and the insufficient motive for the plot against the Host of the Garter Inn, unless this personage is local, and eccentric, and therefore another butt for the dramatist; even thus the *two* dupes—Falstaff and the Host—tend to neutralize each other; we add also the unredeemed fooling of Falstaff, who entirely loses his main characteristic—readiness of resource; the slight space given to Anne Page and Fenton; the strange reference to the German and to Germans; the turning away of other guests to make room for them in spite of the fact that Falstaff and suite remain at the Garter; and there are yet others.

I do not wish to lay stress on this second conjecture, namely, that Falstaff replaces some previously sketched leading character; but the first—that a play was already outlined, may deserve some attention. We have not, as it seems, in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," a hastily conceived single story or incident, harmonizing at every point with the character of Falstaff, but the usual complex and carefully elaborated plot, which after evolution will show how the townsfolk of Windsor could teach a foreigner some good manners (Mumpellgart was a pompous man, and gave himself airs). This is the texture of the plot; the main part of it follows the lines of the main authority—Tarleton's "The Tale of the Two Lovers of Pisa" (in his "Newes out of Purgatorie," 1590). The resemblances between the play and this story are unmistakeable—"I hope to make the old pesant her Husband looke broad headed by a paire of brow antlers." . . . "The olde doctor askte when should be the time: marry quoth Lionello to-morrow

at foure of the clocke in the afternoone, we'll dub the olde squire Knight of the forked order." Here is a possible suggestion of Herne the Hunter, and a less possible suggestion of Mumpellgart clamouring for his title. Tarleton was indebted to "*Le tredici piacevoli notti*" of Straparola, 1569, in whose work we find two other tales that furnished hints to Shakespeare. "*The Story of Filenio*" accounts for the fact that more than one lady is concerned in the futile gallantries of Falstaff, namely, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page; and in "*The Story of Nerisio of Portugal*," the lover is concealed amongst clothes. That Shakespeare owed something to each of these three stories may be conceded; and it need hardly be added that with his accustomed high moral and artistic judgment he took the gold and refused the dross. I might mention that the "*Il Pecorone*" of Ser Giovanni, which he had been using for his "*Merchant of Venice*," has the story of a lover who was concealed among linen.

Such then is the main plot—we can hardly call it "a rogue in love"; the rogue's mere animal nature is insisted upon by the fact that he attempts the honour of two women at once—women who have given him hospitality, whose worldly possessions are his main motive; but the "*Merry Wives*" are much more than a match for the contemptible and blundering schemer, and their "honest knaveries" are a wholesome and delightful condemnation of his base practices. One other element, however, enters into this primary action of the piece—the jealousy of Ford, a common stage device, yet dignified by Shakespeare's treatment, and destined in "*Othello*" to reach its culmination as legitimate material for the drama. (See Section 31 of this Chapter.)

The love of Anne Page and Fenton is so slightly dramatised that we can hardly regard it as a secondary plot; nor should we seek for its suggestion in earlier literature; it has the usual link with the major plot—that

of characters who pass from one set of incidents to the other; chief among these characters are the Merry Wives themselves, the bond of interest being effected by the fortunes of Anne Page and Ford. Of the third plot, in which the Host of the Garter is the principal figure, I have spoken already; I find no sufficient motive for his punishment, which distracts our attention from the righteous retribution that overtakes Falstaff.

Of the characters, beyond what I have said above, there is little to add that falls within the scope of an introductory volume. I have referred to the strange part assigned to Mrs. Quickly, which becomes strangest of all where she assumes the Fairy Queen, and addresses her impossible poetry, not unmixed with French, to the "orphan heirs of fixed destiny" (V. v. 43). Ford, with all his jealousy, is not uninteresting; but while the other characters sport with life, he takes it a little too seriously. Like the jealous husband, the French physician is a familiar figure on the stage at this date—in "Doctor Dodipol," for example, written somewhat later than "Merry Wives"; his name may be due to the fact that the Dr. Caius who is associated with Cambridge excluded Welshmen from his Fellowships. And as to the Welshman, he too has eccentricities of speech and manner that commend themselves to the popular dramatist, and Shakespeare will better the experiment in "Henry V," and add moreover a Scotchman and an Irishman.

The close of the play, which reminds us not a little of "A Midsummer Night's Dream,"<sup>1</sup> is approximately poetical; elsewhere (Chapter VII) I quote from the song of the fairies, and call attention to the excellent sentiment expressed in excellent verse which is the moral—or one of the many good morals—of the play, the senti-

<sup>1</sup> See reference to "Merry Wives" in review of that play; also cf.: "I'd set an ox-head to your lion's hide, And make a monster of you" ("King John," I. ii. 292-3).



ment that condemns the "thousand irreligious cursed hours, Which forced marriage would have brought upon her" (V. v 232-243)

## (23) KING HENRY V, 1599

*Historical Particulars*

We may begin with the following entries in the Registers of the Stationers' Company 1600 "4 Augusti.

As you like yt | a booke

Henry the ffift | a booke

Euery man in his humour | a booke } to be staied

The commedie of muche Adoo about

nothing a booke | "

1600 "14 Augusti

Thomas Entred for his Copyes by Direction of mas-

Pavyer<sup>1</sup> ter *white* warden vnder his hand wrytinge.

These Copyes followinge beinge thinges

formerlye printed and sett over to the sayd

Thomas Pavyer viz The historye of

Henry the Vth with the battell of Agen-

court "

From the foregoing we learn that the first application for license was unsuccessful. The Lord Chamberlain's company may have objected to the publication, and as far as we know, "As You Like It" was altogether withdrawn, or, less likely, it was not ready for publication. Ten days later "Henry V" was licensed, and somewhat later in the same year it appeared with the following title-page

"The | Cronicle | History of Henry the ffift, | with his  
battell fought at *Agin Court* in | *France* Together with  
*Aunient* | *Pistoll*. | *As it hath bene sundry times playd*

<sup>1</sup> Millington and Busby, publishers of the First Quarto, made over their interest to Pavyer, whose name appears on the Second Quarto

*by the Right honorable | the Lord Chamberlaine his servants. | [Creede's device] LONDON | Printed by Thomas Creede, for Tho. Millington, and Iohn Busby. And are to be sold at his house in Carter Lane, next | the Powle head. 1600 | .*

This Quarto is a very imperfect copy of the original play which is represented in the Folio edition, or possibly of a shortened acting version. It is not half the length of the Folio version; it omits the choruses, the Epilogue, the first scenes of Act I and Act III, the second scene of Act IV, and several of the characters; possibly it found occasional use as a short stage copy of the play. Moreover it prints the prose as verse, for the purpose, it would seem, of enlarging its bulk.

The Second Quarto (1602) is a reprint of the First, with some trifling alterations, and the Third (1608) is a reprint of the Second, introducing some corrections and improvements.

For the question of date I must refer the reader to the section immediately preceding (No. 22); to this may be added the important evidence afforded by the well-known passage in the Chorus to Act V, which anticipates the return of Essex from Ireland, "Bringing rebellion broached on his sword." Essex, accompanied by Shakespeare's friend and patron, Southampton, left for Ireland, March 27th, 1599, and returned at the end of September in the same year; and we may infer that the play was completed and perhaps acted between these dates, and before the discomfiture of Essex had become known. On the other hand (p. 22) it is not mentioned by Meres in 1598. Further, "this wooden O" of the first Chorus may refer to the Globe Theatre recently built.<sup>1</sup> I may add briefly that the evidence of style is in accordance with this date; the blank verse is more flexible than in

<sup>1</sup> 1598-1599, by Burbage, with the materials of the old "Theatre" of Shoreditch.

"Henry IV"; while in the lyric melodies or the martial music we detect no note of the sadness that is soon to follow.

Turning now to the question of Shakespeare's originals for his "Henry V," we find that, as in the two parts of "Henry IV," he was indebted to Holinshed, and "The Famous Victories of Henry the fifth" (Section 21), which itself was based on Holinshed. As an example of the use made by Shakespeare of his authorities I will quote a passage from "The Famous Victories," which makes it evident that he must have used the latter as well as Holinshed.

*Archb.* And it please your Maiestie, | My Lord Prince  
Dolphin greets you well, | With this present.

*He deliuereth a Tunne of Tennis Balles.*

*Hen.* 5. What a gilded Tunne? | I pray you my Lord  
of Yorke, looke what is in it? | *Yorke.* And it please your  
Grace, | Here is a Carpet and a Tunne of Tennis balles.

*Hen.* 5. A Tunne of Tennis balles? | . . . My lord prince  
Dolphin is very pleasant with me."

In this passage we have the suggestion of the line "We are glad the Dauphin is so pleasant with us" (I, ii, 256), for which there is no hint in Holinshed.

We may add that there is no trace of the famous wooing scene (V, ii, 98-298) in Holinshed, but it occurs (Katherine, however, speaks in English), in "The Famous Victories." The well-known simile of the "honey-bees" (I, ii, 183-204) is based on a passage in Lyly's "Euphues," and this again on Pliny's "Natural History."

The time analysis is: 1st day, I. i. ii. (Interval); 2nd day, II. i. (Interval); 3rd day, II. ii. iii. (Interval); 4th day, II. iv. (Interval); 5th day, III. i-iii. (Interval), III. iv; 6th day, III. v.; 7th day, III. vi. vii. (part); 8th day, III. vii. (part), IV. i-viii. (Interval); 9th day, V. i.; 10th day, V. ii.

*Critical remarks*

What should perhaps be a final reflection I will place first, that in writing this magnificent national epic Shakespeare, like Virgil, at once glorifies and edifies a great, if a less heroic present by his story of the heroic past :

Small time, but in that small most greatly lived  
This star of England.

If the analogy is not to be pressed further, it is at least worth mentioning, "As, by a lower but loving likelihood" (Chorus to Act V, l. 29), and the solitary instance in all Shakespeare of an Irishman<sup>1</sup> among his *dramatis personæ* may give some emphasis to the thought expressed or implied so often in the play (II. Chorus, 16-19):

O England ! model to thy inward greatness,  
Like little body with a mighty heart,  
What mightst thou do, that honour would thee do,  
Were all thy children kind and natural!

That Shakespeare had a special—a political—object in view when he wrote this play, I do not for one moment believe; but I believe most firmly and most gladly that not only in "Henry V," but also in the majestic cycle of these histories we have the expression of an enthusiastic patriotism, made possible only by a time of momentous issues and the birth of national greatness, and that even in our day we should gratefully acknowledge the reflex resultant—a priceless summary of political wisdom, and a noble—an irresistible appeal to national unity.<sup>2</sup>

We may further remark that the subject of "Henry V" was long present to Shakespeare, *e.g.*, we read in "2 Henry

<sup>1</sup> But the Irishman and the Scotchman may have been introduced that they might add their own peculiarities to a popular comic element in the play, and further to give Fluellen another opportunity of bringing down the house with his "variable and pleasing humours." (See title-page of "Merry Wives," Quarto, p. 224; and for the character of Fluellen see p. 219.)

<sup>2</sup> When the danger is over Shakespeare will play with the subject, as in "Troilus" and "The Tempest"; at present, he is terribly in earnest.

VI," IV, ii: "For his father's sake, Henry the Fifth, in whose time boys went to span-counter for French crowns," *sqg.*; and for the long-resounding note of patriotism, see Chapter VIII.

Passing now from the spirit to the form of the play, we note that the dramatic structure is not of a normal type; and this may be implied from the mere presence of a chorus in front of each act; briefly, we have a combination of the two methods, the dramatic and the epic; the story is told mostly by action and dialogue, but partly by an extra-dramatic narrator. To this composite treatment Shakespeare was driven by the scope and grandeur of his subject, and, as is true of nearly all his experiments, the composite method was successful.<sup>1</sup> It is customary, however, to compare the Choruses that link the episodes of "Henry V" with their predecessors in the classic drama; customary also to assert that they have nothing in common with the latter. But the brief truth is that the nature and the function of the classic chorus was variable; that the Chorus in "Henry V" assumes much of this nature and many of these functions, while it adds yet others—"prologue-like"<sup>2</sup> says the poet himself. Apart, moreover, from their dramatic functions, these Choruses are epic in some of their aspects: "O for a Muse of fire that would ascend The brightest heaven of invention."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of course, the Chorus was largely used by his contemporaries, and on one or two other occasions by himself.

<sup>2</sup> In the Folio we have sometimes "Prologue," sometimes "Chorus." Cf. also: "You are as good as a Chorus, my lord" ("Hamlet," III. ii. 225). Also cf.: "Which, chorus-like, her eyes did rain" ("Venus and Adonis," 360), which shows that Shakespeare was acquainted with the classical function of the Chorus in regard to weeping in sympathy with the sorrows of the actors.

<sup>3</sup> *I.e.* "Oh that I might be inspired by a divinity of poetry whose inspiration bright and light and upward, like fire, would raise my imagination to the highest, the *empyreal* heaven, the heaven of song." Here cf. Milton: "Uplod by thee, Into the Heavens I have presumed An earthly guest, and drawn *empyreal*-air."

They are finely lyrical, and they are odes to the glory of a king, supplying in this particular what would be impossible in drama. In fact, almost every instrument of poetic music may be heard in this magnificent orchestra of "Henry V," which remains not least among the glories of the nation that it glorified.

Daring and successful like the genius that created them, such achievements as "Henry V" have a power to turn criticism into wondering delight; but Shakespeare himself would have been the first to demand from his readers an intelligent and not a fatuous admiration. His "architectonics" may be—indeed, they are, supreme; but we are too apt to assume that his dramatic technique is unimpeachable; and I shall not be far wrong if I assert that in proportion to his genius he is more open to criticism on minor<sup>1</sup> points than any other dramatic author. This may be proved, and proved abundantly, from the play before us, if only by an investigation of the character of "Henry V," which Shakespeare tried to build up on two foundations, the tradition of early wildness suddenly reformed, and the tradition of assumed wildness; he therefore, I think, failed to make the character consistent. On the other hand, I may point to a masterpiece of characterization in this same play. I doubt whether it could ever be surpassed. We may remember that the Epilogue to "2 Henry IV" promised: "If you be not too much cloyed with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katharine of France: where, for anything I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat"; and I have noticed that Falstaff in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," like many another second effort with the same theme, is a comparative failure. Shall we say that Shakespeare or the Epilogue mentions the famous fat knight merely to advertise a play and draw a crowd? Shakespeare, let us add, already foresaw that the Falstaff

<sup>1</sup> Rarely on major points also. See section 28 of this Chapter.

of "Hal's" greener days would find little scope for his genius in a play that was to present "the warlike Henry" in his reformed and riper days; that the boon companions of the wild young prince must be forsaken by the majestic sovereign; that if on a stage thronged with heroes and resounding with heroic deeds, any fitting part could be found for Falstaff to play, that part must be—to die. And if, as I believe, this was Shakespeare's intention, let us be grateful; for, although without such an episode and such an end, Sir John would have been the world's marvel, he would not have been a man; he might always have commanded our laughter, but he would not have won our love. "The King has killed his heart"—that makes all the difference; the fool was a humourist, the jester was human.

And what an end! Before our reverent eyes death takes off from him his muddy vesture of decay and opens the gate of that heaven which lay about him in his infancy; he *babbled of green fields*.<sup>1</sup>

In his fulfilment of the other promise of the Epilogue above-mentioned, to "make you merry with fair Katherine of France," I count Shakespeare somewhat less fortunate. If Katherine liked the match, she could hardly have liked the manner of the wooing; and it may be questioned whether at such an important moment of his life Henry should have recalled that former self which, according to Shakespeare, he had assumed with a definite object, and then abandoned for ever. "Our tongue is rough, coz"; but that is not the fact;<sup>2</sup> see, for example, I. i. 47-50.

1 "A whisper from his dawn of life, a breath  
From some fair dawn beyond the doors of death."

2 We may contrast this "rough speech" and speaking "plain soldier" with Carlisle's "Hear him but reason in divinity," etc. At the same time we compare his "A speaker is but a prater," and then again his conversation with Bates and Williams.

If in the dialogue with Katherine he had meant nothing, he would have been merely diplomatic and respectful; if he had meant something, he would have expressed his meaning with becoming seriousness and impressiveness. We can only conclude that here, as on one or two other occasions, Shakespeare took up his pen to please the groundlings; and we may add generally that whereas the dramatist is admirable in his sketch of Henry as a man amongst men, he sometimes fails in presenting him as King, especially in his foreign relations.

As we close this series of historical plays, a word may be said of the women they present to us. They are few, and kept mostly in the background of the historic picture; they are strikingly different from the heroines of the other dramas. Here, if they do not "loudly and perpetually wail," their part is very subordinate and very passive; they are mostly unheroic wives of men of action; Lady Percy who was "No farther wise Than Harry Percy's wife," may serve as a type. See "*1 Henry IV.*," II. iii. 105-120.

But again, Shakespeare's best characters in his early dramas, especially among the women (Section 25), are drawn mostly from low life; and in the play before us we have yet to notice a character who is perhaps more than woman; at least, though she "is dead i' the spital," she is immortal. Need I say it is Nell, Dame Pistol, quondam Quickly. Like Falstaff she comes into the drama to die; but not this alone. It is her part to assist—and something more—at Sir John's death-bed, and to break out into incoherent mixed poetry and East-cheap as she tells us the story of his end. It is her part, moreover, to testify to Shakespeare's marvellous power of sketching from the reality, and to be the prototype of a host of disappointing successors.



## (24) MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, 1599.

*Historical Particulars.*

We have found "Much Ado about Nothing" (p. 230), in the Stationers' Registers in company with "As you Like It," "Henry V," and "Every Man in his Humour," August 4th, 1600. A few days later (August 23rd), it was again registered, and a few weeks later it was published in Quarto, with the following title-page: "Much Adoe about Nothing. As it hath been sundrie times publikely acted, by the Right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his Servants. Written by William Shakespeare. London. Printed by V. S. for Andrew Wise and William Aspley. 1600."

The next appearance of the play is in the Folio of 1623.

The text of the Quarto, which is trustworthy, was printed from an acting copy; it even tells us that William Kemp took the part of Dogberry, and Richard Cowley that of Verges. The Folio Version is based on that of the Quarto.

The date of the play is probably the autumn of 1599, and we may place it between "Henry V" and "As you Like It." There is a possible reference to the return of Essex (see review of "Henry V") in I. i. 8, and I. i. 45. The evidence of style refers us to the same date. But it has been conjectured that the play was drafted much earlier, and that it may be identified with the "Loue labours wonne" of Meres, page 22. An earlier draft is not impossible, but the conjecture (see p. 177) is not supported by direct evidence. I may add that a line (I. i. 234), "In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke," is adapted from Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy" (licensed 1592, written about 1588).

The plot of "Much Ado about Nothing" is outlined in Bandello's story of "Timbreo di Cardona," 1554; Shake-

Shakespeare also read the tale of "Ariodante and Genevra" in the "Orlando Furioso," and that of "Phaon and Claribel" in the "Faery Queen." Ariosto's poem had been translated by Harington in 1591; and, from the "Accounts of the Revels" we hear of a "Historie of Ariodante and Geneuora shewed before her Matie on Shrovetuesdaie at night enacted by Mr. Mulcasters children" (1583), which may have given Shakespeare a hint for the Margaret episode; and from Spenser he derived suggestions for Borachio and Don John. Belleforest's version of Bandello he may have glanced at, as he did when writing "Twelfth Night." Further, the missing character Imogen (see Section 38), and the allusion in the speech of Beatrice (II. i. 248-251), remind us of similar discrepancies in "The Tempest," and may point to an earlier draft or to a lost play, but probably not to "Die Schöne Phaenicia" of Jacob Ayser (see Section 40).

The action of the play is included within nine days, with suitable intervals, wherein our imagination may assist the poet in his work of dramatic economy; and it is hard to determine whether four, five, or six days are represented. Mr. Daniel's analysis is as follows: 1st day, I., II. i. ii.; 2nd day, II. iii., III. i.-iii.; 3rd day, III. iv. v., IV., V. i. ii. and part of iii.; 4th day, V. iii. (part of), iv.

### *Critical Remarks*

If Shakespeare borrows the body of his drama, at least he puts the soul into it; in Bandello, or Ariosto, or Spenser, we listen to a slender story—the story, let us say, of Hero and Claudio. We turn to Shakespeare; the story is not so much as the body of his play, but a mere backbone; the plot may be Hero and Claudio, but the drama is Beatrice and Benedict. To the mere story Shakespeare adds problem, theorem, or a metaphysical something that is more important and more interesting; this is almost invariably his practice and his art. Further, of his new and

main motive, we are likely to find some account in the play itself; let us make quotations; Beatrice is "my dear lady Disdain"; Benedict is "a professed tyrant to their sex"; and these twain are "too wise to woo peaceably." That is Shakespeare's drama; and our interest reaches a delightful yet trembling climax when the wooers stand before the altar, still defiant, and the ropes that at last drag them together are of twisted rhyme and deftly-woven conspiracy.

All this takes us back to "Love's Labour's Lost," where the general and the abstract has forerun this embodiment in the individual and the concrete; and the war of the sexes will be symbolized throughout all future generations in the two names, Beatrice and Benedict. So in a graver mood the poet has given us types for all time in Troilus, Pandarus, Cressida; so in a mood yet graver he gave us Goneril and Regan, Kent and Cordelia; so in all his moods and all his dramas he gives us these types or ideals, and the world is made we know not how much wiser and nobler and richer and more beautiful. To overestimate this service of Shakespeare's song is impossible; to underestimate it is a sin against his memory; and to point to it is the first duty of the commentator. And one word as to the poet's mood; if joyous, as in these comedies, the service is none the less real; we learn at first through laughter, then through tears, and at the last through love.

I have made these remarks at this point because it is customary to regard "Much Ado about Nothing" as the first member of a supreme trilogy of comedies, the others being "As You Like It," and "Twelfth Night." Certainly these are in ascending order, as indicated by their women—Beatrice, Rosalind, Viola; by their music which, faintly audible in "Much Ado," rings through the forest of "As You Like It," and in "Twelfth Night" becomes a magnificent symphony rendered by the whole orchestra of

love; or in thought, which deepens throughout these dramas; or characterization, which rises from Don John and Dogberry through Jaques and Touchstone to Malvolio and Feste. But I say no more about this trilogy, as I prefer to take into account "The Merchant of Venice," and will therefore refer my readers to the summary in Chapter VIII.

As a fact, "Much Ado" has backward and stronger links with "Love's Labour's Lost," where we met with the shadowy Biron and Rosaline; and with "A Midsummer Night's Dream," where, for a minor comparison, we have Hermia and Helena, one of whom is "short," the other "curst," like Hero and Beatrice in this drama; moreover, Dogberry and his companions belong to the same village as Bottom and his base mechanicals; possibly "Much Ado" was sketched earlier than we are inclined to admit. As to "Love's Labour's Lost," besides the war of the sexes, we have over again in this play the war of words and wit. Smartness of dialogue is indeed the characteristic of "Much Ado About Nothing."

Next let us admire the marvellous blending of the three dramatic elements; we may almost call them the tragedy of Hero, the comedy of Beatrice, and the farce of Dogberry; with what art are these three contrasted and combined.

A word on the character of Don John; he is not only the villain of the piece—"a plain-dealing villain"; he is "of a very melancholy disposition," and comes before us as the first of that long line of melancholy figures who embody a theory of Aristotle (see p. 248), and "make all use of their discontent, for they use it only"; and their best representative, of course, is Jaques in our next play.

## (25) AS YOU LIKE IT, 1600

*Historical Particulars*

We have already met with "As You Like It," for it appears in the Register of the Stationers' Company with "Henry V," and other dramas under date August, 1600 (p. 230); and though the year is not stated, we imply it from the context. The play, however, was not printed before its appearance in the Folio of 1623, permission for its earlier publication having, as we may suppose, been refused. An upward limit of date may be supplied by the line "Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?" which is quoted from Marlowe's "Hero and Leander," published in 1598. Nor is "As You Like It" among the plays mentioned by Meres in 1598 (see p. 22).

Minor evidence of date may be discovered in Celia's statement (I. ii. 79), "Since the little wit that fools have was silenced" which may be a reference "to the burning of satirical books by public authority, June 1st, 1599"; and the words "like Diana in the fountain" (IV. i. 129), have a possible reference to a fountain with a statue, which was erected on the Eleanor Cross in Cheapside in the year 1596. We may add that the evidence of style, metre, and subject place it close to "Much Ado About Nothing" and "Twelfth Night," and probably between these plays.

In the pastoral novel of Lodge, "Rosalynde, Euphues' Golden Legacie," which was published in 1590, Shakespeare found the suggestion for his play, and a good deal of its material. He may also have read "The Tale of Gamlyn," a fourteenth century verse romance to which Lodge was indebted.

The title "As You Like It" may have also been suggested by Lodge—"If you like it, so"; but we find a kindred title in "What You Will," and each may be interpreted after much the same fashion. "I hope you will

like my play, but I can make no apology for its imperfections"; and in the epilogue the thought is repeated—"I cannot insinuate with you in behalf of a good play. . . . I charge you . . . to like as much of this play as please you." So also in the prologue to "*Troilus and Cressida*" we have "Like or find fault; do as your pleasures are." Otherwise we may interpret (as also in the case of "*Twelfth Night*"), "call my play what you will."

As to the locality of the drama, like that of Prospero's island, nine-tenths of it is Warwickshire, or, at least, England; but there are special associations; Shakespeare's mother was Mary Arden, and Drayton in his "*Polyolbion*" celebrates the Forest of Arden in Warwickshire; and the manor of Weston in Arden was held by the family of De Bosco or de Boys, one of whom, Sir Roland de Boys may have suggested Shakespeare's Orlando; so that when the poet adopted Lodge's French "*Forest of Arden*," he had less scruple in making it English. Moreover, Jaques and Audrey are said to be Warwickshire names.

Jaques, Touchstone, and Audrey are characters of Shakespeare's own creating. Suggestions for Charles the Wrestler, and for Touchstone's discourse upon lying came from "*Saviolo, his Practice*," 1595, a book which Shakespeare consulted on other occasions.

And here I must refer to what has been said in the preliminary chapter, and must be repeated constantly in these reviews, that when we have called attention to the primary sources, we must remember the countless minor springs and brooks that pour their tribute into the main stream of any drama by Shakespeare; we could not suppose, for instance, that he got to work on this pastoral without taking a look—and something more—at his copy of Sidney's "*Arcadia*"; indeed, some of the finest touches in the play are due to that popular work; and what we say of this book applies to a number of others. If a genius

does not actually create, he re-creates where smaller minds can only copy.

Further, in regard to the practical or the aesthetic use of following up these sources—it is infinite. One example, again: shall we retain the Folio reading of the line, "Here feel we *not* the penalty of Adam," or adopt Theobald's emendation—"Here feel we *but* the penalty of Adam" (*i.e.* "the season's difference"); let us ask Lodge: "Did you but live awhile in their content, you would say that the court were rather a place of sorrow than of solace. Here shall not fortune thwart you but in mean misfortunes. . . . Envy stirs not us; as we exceed not in diet, so we have enough to satisfy." This is rendered in Shakespeare:

Are not these woods  
More free from peril than the envious court?  
Here feel we not the penalty of Adam.

(*i.e.*, what Milton calls "the curse"—"with labour I must earn my bread"). But, finally, those who know Shakespeare will know also what is perhaps his most characteristic habit in the use of language—his moralizing of two—or more—meanings in one word; and having thus recognized the thought of Lodge in the line above quoted, they will note that with an abrupt transition the poet makes it serve also for another thought, wherewith he may proceed in his usual picturesque way.

One other remark; I say little in these reviews concerning the time of the action, though I mostly subjoin the analysis of Mr. Daniel; but whether three hours or three days or three years, it is a question of the ideal, and may generally be left to Shakespeare; yet sometimes it is curiously bound up with a question as to the season of the year; it is in the present instance, and for my part I could not pronounce upon it whether Rosalind should wear silks or furs when Hymen leads her to the woodland altar. It seems to be the poet's aim to represent an out-

door life of all the year round, but winter is most in evidence; and if not over-fanciful, we might suppose he is writing in that season—probably it was early in 1600. However, it seems strange that winter should be insisted upon so often, in his pastoral. But again, all is vague<sup>1</sup>—“Who loves to live in the sun, come hither; here shall he see no enemy but winter;” and equally vague are the locality of the forest, and its fauna and flora. Let us respect the ideal which is seen awry if looked at only in part; let us call the play a “Midsummer Day’s Dream,” even as Shakespeare called another of his plays a “Midsummer Night’s Dream”; and finally, be grateful to the genius that could blend in this harmonious drama the best ideal effects of an obsolete pastoral with the hard facts of his modern civilization.

According to Mr. Daniel, the time of the play is ten days represented on the stage with intervals requisite for the probability of the plot; they are thus distributed: 1st day, I. i.; 2nd day, I. ii. iii.; II. i.; [II. iii.]; 3rd day, II. ii.; [III. i.]; interval of a few days. The journey to Arden: 4th day, II. iv.; 5th day, II. v. vi. vii.; interval; 6th day, III. ii.; interval; 7th day, III. iii.; 8th day, III. iv. v.; IV. i.-iii.; V. I.; 9th day, V. ii. iii.; 10th day, V. iv.

### *Critical Remarks*

The characteristics of “As You Like It” are as clearly marked as they are delightful; we have, if I may parody Tennyson, “All the charm of all the pastorals flowering in one lovely play”; it is the ideal and cumulative expression of that ever recurring instinct in humanity—“man made the town, but God made the country”; an expression as early as the days

<sup>1</sup> The art that preserves this vagueness is consummate, as must be evident to all who read the play through carefully. We have something like it in the enchanted island of “The Tempest.” See p. 243.



When far away  
From the din and the dust of cities  
Corydon left his flocks at play,

and as late as the days when "hither wandering down," Arthur Hallam found the shadows fair and "Shook to all the liberal air The dust and din and steam of town." But no pastoral before or since can rival the masterpiece of Shakespeare.

Of Shakespeare as a poet of nature I have written fully in this volume; I may add that we find in this play some of the best of his *direct* painting

As he lay along,  
Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out  
Upon the brook that brawls along this wood.

In Gray how "indirect," insipid, *by comparison*; yet Gray is very beautiful:

There, at the foot of yonder nodding beech,  
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,  
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,  
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

The figures that flit through these delightful glades must now claim our attention; some of them we seem to have met before, Rosalind and Celia, for example, as Beatrice and Hero, but looked at more closely, they discover their astonishing individuality; others, like the melancholy Jaques, are new, or newer, and remind us that even Shakespeare must gain his experience, and that his experience will make him sad.

Owing partly to the habit of antithesis which was stronger in his early period, and sometimes hampered him as much as it helped, Shakespeare often drew his leading characters in couples; and thus in the early comedies—the best of them—we have Helena and Hermia, Portia and Jessica, Beatrice and Hero, Rosalind and Celia, Olivia and Viola; years later, when Shakespeare

set himself the supreme task of an artist—to paint a woman, not as a man paints, but as an artist, to mix his colours with no masculine prejudice or condescension—then he paints her singly; Marina, Imogen, Perdita, Miranda, brook no rival on their ideal thrones. I shall make this clearer by an example; could we think of Miranda as saying these words, or as having them said to her: “You shall take a woman without her answer when you take her without her tongue”; this is the masculine pettiness and presumption that spoils the picture of any woman.

Shakespeare then at present is a man who plays with his women, not an artist who reveres them; and pretty women they are; Viola is the best of them, and far above any in his fellow dramatists; they are free-mannered yet pure, given to laughter yet not incapable of tears, talkative,<sup>1</sup> yet lovable, keen-witted yet womanly; but they are conventional, not ideal; we delight in them, but do not reverence them.<sup>2</sup> At this period I think Shakespeare’s women of lower life are the most striking creations, Juliet’s nurse, Mrs. Quickly, and Audrey in this play; so Bottom was created before Hamlet.

On the other hand, the heart must follow the brain; and though the love of Orlando and Rosalind is “unnatural,” the lower life must look up to it. For the fact is this: you may find ideal love in the valley, *provided* the valley some time or other has looked or climbed up to “the mountain-top, where is the throne of truth.” But too often it is otherwise, and I am inclined to believe that if we wish to see *the veritable pastoral* for the first and last time in literature, we shall find it not in the romance of Orlando and Rosalind, but in the brute realism of its parody: “*Touchstone*. And how, Audrey?

<sup>1</sup> Some of this, as also with the men, is due to the prevailing euphuism, which finds its way even into the forest.

<sup>2</sup> See also Chapters VII and VIII; also p. 175.

am I the man yet? doth my simple feature content you? *Audrey*. Your features! Lord warrant us! what features?" Truly, as another has told us, "Knowledge is the parent of love"; and as if to complete his scheme, Shakespeare has given us some gradations of knowledge and love; for they rise upward through William, Silvius and Orlando, through Audrey, Phebe and Rosalind; while Corin is yet another stage in the ascent of the ideal, and forms a link between the more conventional Arcadians, Silvius and Phebe, and the more strictly "pastoral" William and Audrey.

Of the other characters, some have been mentioned before in these pages; Jaques, for instance, as a reflection of Shakespeare, and with that a foreshadowing of Hamlet. But there is more in the man; he is Shakespeare's embodiment of a doctrine that is scattered in fragments about his early plays, the doctrine of Aristotle which associates melancholy with certain abnormal or highly-developed mental power; this melancholy, vulgarized into a "humour" which came mostly from France, had not long before played its part in Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour"; but Shakespeare dignifies the conception, though Jaques can "suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs."

The remaining personages call for no remark; but the mention of Jaques leads me to notice one or two minor defects in this play; there are, for example, two characters with the name Jaques. The ending of the play, moreover, has the appearance of haste, and is a little disappointing, especially where we have to understand that Oliver and Celia are "heart in heart."

But we must not forget that in Shakespeare's day—and even in spite of Shakespeare—a woman counted for something less than she does now; and if in our time the maiden moon often sparkles on a sty, it was yet oftener the case in the time of Shakespeare; and I doubt whether

his audience felt as much inclined to revolt as we do when Celia is wasted on Oliver; so is it in other plays, but with somewhat less violence to our modern feelings: Hero has to put up with Claudio, rather than accept him, and Viola is less fortunate in her alliance with Orsino than Olivia with Sebastian. Even in the later romances, we are not altogether reconciled to the treatment of Imogen by Posthumus, and certainly not to the restoration of Hermione to Leontes.

(26) TWELFTH NIGHT, OR WHAT YOU WILL, 1600

*Historical Particulars*

We will begin with a list of the chief authorities from whom Shakespeare may have derived material or hints when engaged upon this play. (1) *Gl'Ingannati* (in the volume entitled "Il Sacrificio; Comedia de gl' Intronati"). Author unknown. First acted, 1531; published at Venice, 1537. (2) "Les Abusés," by Charles Estienne, Lyon, 1543. (A French version of the above.) (3) "Gl'Inganni," by Nicolo Secchi, or Seccho, Florence, 1562. First acted 1547. (4) "Novelle," by Matteo Bandello. La Seconda Parte, Lucca, 1554. (5) "Los Engaños," or "Los Engañados," by Lope de Rueda, 1556. First printed, 1567. (6) "La Española de Florencia," or, "Las Burlas Veras." Author and date uncertain. (7) "Hecatommithi," or, "Cento Novelle," by G. B. Gerdali Cinthio. Monte Regale, 1565. (8) "Histoires Tragiques," by François de Belleforest, (Vol. IV). Paris, 1570. (9) "Riche his Farewell to Militarie Profession etc," by Barnabe Riche, London, 1581. (10) "Laelia" (MS.) Acted 1590 and 1598. (11) "Gl'Inganni, by Curzio Gonzaga, Venice, 1592.

The stream of story that flows through the main plot of "Twelfth Night," as apart from the less serious under-play, had its source in a remote past; we have the Greek *Διδυμοι* as reflected in the "Menaechmi" of Plautus, and

reproduced by Shakespeare in "The Comedy of Errors", and the fable so often met with in early fiction writers, that, namely, of a woman disguised as a page who falls in love with her master, yet pleads his cause with another woman, who in turn falls in love with her. Of this, the first instance in Shakespeare is found in "The Two Gentlemen of Verona."

From the authorities at the head of this section we may select "G'Ingannati" as the chief inspiration of "Twelfth Night," though some of the others were doubtless consulted by Shakespeare. In the poetical Induction which preceded "G'Ingannati" he found, as I believe, the name Malevolti, and changed it to Malvolio. There also he met with a title for his play, "la Notte di Beffana," "the night of Epiphany," or Twelfth Night. From "G'Ingannati," Shakespeare also obtained suggestions for his underplot and for the character of Malvolio; there also is the probable original of Sir Toby, and the name Fabio assumed by Lelia in her disguise supplied Shakespeare with his Fabian.

Hunter was led to the discovery of this Italian play by the following passage in the diary of John Manningham, a barrister of the Middle Temple: ("Feb' 1601.)

"Feb. 2. At our feast wee had a play called 'Twelue Night, or What you Will,' much like the Commedy of Errores, or Menechmi in Plautus, but most like and neere to that in Italian called *Inganni*. A good practice in it to make the steward beleeeve his Lady widowe was in love with him, by counterfeyting a letter as from his Lady in generall termes, telling him what shée liked best in him, and prescribing his gesture in smiling, his appar-aile, etc., and then when he came to practise making him beleeeue they tooke him to be mad."

As to the Italian play mentioned by Manningham, it will be seen from the opening paragraph of this section

that there were two Ingannis before 1600, and of these the second is most like "Twelfth Night"; in this volume the name assumed by the lady in disguise is Cesare, to which Shakespeare was surely indebted for his Cesario.

The story as told by Bandello was almost certainly in Shakespeare's hands, and as certainly the French version in Belleforest. As to the "Apolonius and Silla" of Barnabe Riche, it was the least suggestive of all these originals to which Shakespeare had access; indeed it is poor stuff, and merited if it did not receive the poet's contempt. Cinthio and the Spanish plays he may have consulted; also the Latin version, "Laelia"; and there is a passage in the second book of Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia" (1599), which he must have read, where a woman disguised as a page follows her master to the death. Nor have we exhausted the list of authors who made literary capital of these or similar incidents.

For the title, "Twelfth Night," we have a suggestion above, nor do I think it worth while to make any other. The alternative, "What you Will," was added in the spirit that gave the name, "As You Like It" to another famous comedy (p. 242).

As to the date of "Twelfth Night," it is not mentioned by Meres in 1598, but it is mentioned by Manningham in 1601. Moreover, in Forde's "Parismus," Part I (1598) Olivia is a Queen of Thessaly, and Violetta is the name of the lady in disguise, and it is likely that Shakespeare copied from Forde. Further, the "new map" referred to in III. ii. 79, was published in 1599. In the same year Sir Robert Shirley returned from his embassy to the Shah of Persia, and gave point to the reference in II. v. 180. Less trustworthy as evidence are the publication in 1599 of Morley's "Consort Lessons," containing the song, "O mistress mine" (II. iii., *sqq.*), or Dr. Harsnet's "Discovery of the fraudulent practises of John Darrell" (1599), which offered a motive for attacking

the Puritans, or a passage in "Every man out of his Humour" (1599), in which Jónson is supposed to refer to "Twelfth Night."<sup>1</sup> But enough has been said to make the year 1600 a likely date for the composition of the play, and, finally, the style and metre refer it to the same period.

The Time Analysis of this drama is: 1st day, I. i-iii. Interval of three days. 2nd day, I. iv., v.; II. i.-iii. 3rd day, II. iv., v.; III. IV. V.

### *Critical Remarks.*

Something under this head will be found in Chapter VII (see also Ch. VIII), where "Twelfth Night" is referred to for illustrations of Shakespeare's doctrine of love, his religious views, and his political opinions. Here we may add concerning the play generally, that it is the comedy of comedies; not only are the elements of comic drama and comic satire from Plautus to Rabelais herein represented as fully and as perfectly as may be, for the comedy of "Twelfth Night" is both relieved and heightened by an interwoven exquisite romance, while strains of the finest poetry make perfect harmony with the comic undertone. Further, the play is splendidly wrought; plot, underplot, incident, character, movement, dialogue, diction, each is excellent; and our interest is sustained throughout at the highest dramatic level. Finally, a gay good humour is the all-pervading spirit of the drama; its gentle satire is wholesome, not bitter (I. v. 98-103).

Yet, as is true of many other plays, it discovers some slight defects, especially of dramatic technique; the duration of the action is hard to determine; the marriage of Sebastian seems forced and hurried; that of Sir Toby and Maria is ill defined; the sequence of Act and Scene is hard

<sup>1</sup> The reference to Coke's words at the trial of Raleigh, "Thou viper, for I thou thee, thou traitor" (III. ii. 44), are probably a later interpolation. See the author's "Twelfth Night," Introduction (Arden Edition).

to follow; "eine besondere Schwierigkeit bot . . . die Oekonomie der Schlusscene";<sup>1</sup> and some will add that there is lack of characterization. But we are not greatly troubled by these spots on Shakespeare's sun, and we are content to say with Montégut, "Mais chut! . . . Nous sommes ici dans le monde de la féerie."

Let us turn rather to the manifold beauties of the play. Besides what will be explained in Chaps. VII and VIII, I may mention here that we have in Orsino a man who reminds us of an elaborate study in one of Shakespeare's earlier dramas; for if Richard II was in love with grief, Orsino is in love with love; each fondles his passion, revels in it, and parades it, till it has become "high fantastical."

As will be noticed in the next section, Shakespeare often creates a character of the opposite sex who may serve as a reflection or counterpart of some leading male character; and in this play the love of Olivia comes nearest to that of the Duke. If not "high-fantastical," her passion is at least fantastical. This is best seen at the close of the drama, where she appears to resign herself readily enough to the arms of Sebastian.

Sebastian, moreover, serves (we all know the device) as a foil to the Duke, who dallied with love till he forgot to be a lover; whereas Sebastian is nothing if not practical in this business of wooing.

Malvolio, whose mere name is a full-length portrait, I will leave to the chapters before mentioned; but Feste must have some consideration at this point. He is probably the most complex character of them all; he is the directing spirit of the drama; he is "for all waters"; he "wears not motley in his brain," but is acute and learned, "wise enough to play the fool"; in brief, he is Shakespeare's ideal fool, and the elaborate exposition of

<sup>1</sup> "The arrangement of the closing scene presents an especial difficulty."—  
OECHELMÄUSER.



a clown's function in III. i. 61-69 was not assigned to "Twelfth Night" by accident.

In conclusion, notwithstanding the minor discrepancies referred to in a former paragraph, I may call attention to the marvellous oneness of "Twelfth Night"; there is nothing in excess; at every point drama and poem mingle and are transfigured; the notes of wisdom and merriment, tenderness and raillery, joy and sadness melt into the controlling harmony of love; the play indeed is among those perfect creations in which faultless form is vitalized by faultless spirit.

#### (27) JULIUS CAESAR, 1599

##### *Historical Particulars*

In the "Mirror of Martyrs," by John Weaver, which was published in 1601, occur the following lines:

The many-headed multitude were drawn  
By Brutus' speech, that Caesar was ambitious.  
When eloquent Mark Antony had shown  
His virtues, who but Brutus then was vicious?

That these lines refer to Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" can scarcely be doubted; the contrast between the speeches and their effects is barely suggested by Plutarch, and is not likely to have been found in any other play on the subject. In his Dedication Weaver states that his work "some two years ago was made fit for the print." Taking this in conjunction with the negative testimony of Meres (see p. 22), we may select 1599 as the date of the drama. Further, I am of opinion that "Julius Caesar" certainly preceded "Hamlet," and the first draft of "Hamlet" should have been made about 1600-1. It may be added that Clove, in Jonson's "Every Man out of His Humour," begins a speech thus: "Then coming to the pretty animal as reason long since is fled to animals, you know,"

which is evidently a sneering allusion<sup>1</sup> to "Julius Caesar," III, ii, 112, 113; and "Every Man out of His Humour" was published in 1599. In this comedy Jonson (Act V., Sc. iv.) also quotes the words, "Et tu, Brute," which he probably borrowed from "Julius Caesar," though both he and Shakespeare may have derived them from the same source, possibly a Latin play on the subject of Caesar's death, which was acted in 1582; or from "The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke" (1595), "Et tu Brute, wilt thou stab Caesar too?" This line is repeated in Nicholson's "Acolastus his Afterwitte" (1600).

The evidence of date furnished by the metre and the style of the play refer it to the time of "Henry V"; and the many references to Plutarch in the plays written during the two or three years before 1600, seem to show that Shakespeare had the subject of "Julius Caesar" under consideration at that time. It may be added that a stanza of Drayton's, "The Baron's Wars," 1603, was probably indebted to Antony's speech in V. v. 63-75; and the resemblance was made closer still in a later edition of Drayton's poem.

As is well known, Shakespeare relied mainly for his material on Sir Thomas North's translation (1579) of Plutarch's "Lives," chiefly those of Caesar, Brutus, and Antony,<sup>2</sup> and he follows his original closely, sometimes

<sup>1</sup> Jonson again ridicules the play in his "Staple of News," (1625) "Cry you mercy, you did not wrong but with just cause"; also in his "Timber or Discoveries": "Many times he (Shakespeare) fell into those things could not escape laughter, as when he said in the person of Caesar, one speaking to him: 'Caesar, thou dost me wrong,' he replied, 'Caesar did never wrong but with just cause!'" Although Jonson quotes what may be the wording of the original version, it is possible that he suppresses a line (such as that at present in the Folio copy) which would remove the appearance of error. In any case the passage has been altered, possibly by the author, who thus gives us an interesting example of changes sometimes effected in the text of the plays.

<sup>2</sup> North translated the French version of Jacques Amyot, and not the original Greek.

verbally. He may also have used Appian's "Roman History," the extant portions of which were published in English in 1578. It is not likely that Shakespeare consulted other dramas on the subject of Caesar, which need not be mentioned here.

The time of the action is as follows: 1st day, I. i. ii. Interval, one month. 2nd day, I. iii. 3rd day, II. and III. Interval. 4th day, IV. i. Interval. 5th day, IV. ii. iii. Interval (one day at least). 6th day, V.

### *Critical Remarks*

Speaking generally, the main outlines of every play of Shakespeare are determined by some pre-existing sketch or sketches. If a single sketch lies before the poet, then he will reproduce it, however modified, as Hamlet or Othello, or some other; but if, as in Plutarch, his eye rests on figures that have rival claims to dramatic representation, then his drama may be composite both in structure and interest, but it will bear a name that is most attractive from a theatrical standpoint; and such is Shakespeare's play of "Julius Caesar."

To the above should be added one other consideration; though generally guided by a fine artistic taste, Shakespeare was always disposed to incorporate whatever he found suggestive or attractive in the originals he worked upon, and more than once the result to his dramatic enterprise was divided interest or incongruity or inconsistency.<sup>1</sup> This is especially the case when he has confidence in his

<sup>1</sup> As a minor example where many abound, we may quote from "Julius Caesar" the passage V. i. 101-103, "Even by the rule, . . ." etc., in which we have a blundering transcript of North's obscure rendering of Plutarch. Cf. also the reproduction of Florio's "Montaigne" in "The Tempest" (p. 38). Sometimes also he perverts his original; Plutarch introduces the "falling sickness" as a possible excuse for Caesar's not coming to receive the senate. Shakespeare brings it in somewhat doubtfully unless as an additional physical infirmity for Cassius to fasten upon.

original, and yet more if the material is poetically worked up; and all this is true of Plutarch.

Some aspects of "Julius Caesar" will be noticed in Chapter VIII; here we may remark that although the tragedy is of a normal type (a conflict between Caesar and a conspiracy which will make his weakness fatal, and then itself be destroyed), it has, nevertheless, some claim to a double title, "The Tragedy of the Death of Caesar" and "The Tragedy of the Death of Brutus"; and, speaking roughly, each of these tragedies occupies one-half of the play.

These, it may be added, were rival subjects, both of which appealed to Shakespeare's sympathies and genius, and both had their important stage qualifications and traditions. Caesar had long been a name for the theatre to conjure with, and Brutus, with his ancestor and namesake, had been known to the people and their playwrights almost from the very birth of the drama in England.

To return to what we may call provisionally the double tragedy; the protagonist in each embodies an idea, the one of majesty and authority, the other of patriotism—the one of power, the other of virtue; each is great, and each becomes yet greater by his violent and predetermined death; each, moreover, is made human by a weakness, and to that weakness he is sacrificed as a victim on the altar of dramatic justice; and lastly, the funeral oration of each is pronounced by the same orator, whose words of mingled elegy and eulogy are so nearly alike in the case of either hero, that they might be exchanged without any detracton of his honour; for by the corpse of Caesar Mark Antony soliloquizes:

Thou art the ruins of the noblest man  
That ever lived in the tide of times,

and over the dead body of Brutus he protests with equal fervour:

This was the noblest Roman of them all . . .  
 His life was gentle, and the elements  
 So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up,  
 And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

But now we face the poet's difficulty. If Caesar, at the outset, is heroic, Brutus is impossible; or thus: can two men be equally noble if one is to become an assassin of the other? Nor are we sure that this difficulty is surmounted even by the genius of Shakespeare, though he lends some colour of sanction to the deed of Brutus by representing Caesar not only as a tyrant, but a tyrant weak in body and mind. That some of this colour is false and glaring must be evident from such passages as the following, to which many others might be added:

"He would be crowned"; "I am constant as the northern star"; "Look upon Caesar"; "Always I am Caesar"; "If I could pray to move, prayers would move me"; "He hath the falling sickness"; "Come on my right hand for this ear is deaf"; "He had a fever"; "The tired Caesar"; "This god did shake"; "He fell down in the market-place and foamed at the mouth"; "I did hear him groan"; "A man of such a feeble temper"; "He is superstitious grown of late"; "When I tell him he hates flatterers, He says he does, being then most flattered"; "He plucked me ope his doublet, and offered them his throat to cut"; "How foolish do your fears seem now, Calpurnia! I am ashamed I did yield to them."

Of course, some of these quotations may be referred to the jealousy of conspirators; nevertheless, as we read the first two acts of the play, we must believe that Shakespeare has overreached himself; for his sketch of Caesar not only falsifies historic truth; it is also a repulsive caricature.

Nor does Brutus altogether escape this danger, though he receives fairer justice at the hands of the poet, who supplies him *ad nauseam* with motives and apologies for

his deed, even to making him the victim of a stratagem (I. ii. 320 *sqq.*); yet, in his case also, both probability and our patience are put to a severe test, for Brutus will kill Caesar, not for what he is, but for what he may be;<sup>1</sup> and the reputed philosopher supports his absurd argument by an equally absurd illustration.

Thus, then, we have a kind of dramatic see-saw—Brutus up, Caesar down, and *vice versa*: Caesar, moreover, lives a second and a nobler life apart from the body: death alone could give him his due, and he remains on the stage till the close of the play, for in the might and majesty of spirit he walks abroad more royal, more noble, and more just than any earthly potentate: "O mighty Caesar! dost thou lie so low?"—"O mighty Julius! *Thou art mighty yet.*"

But of these two leading characters in the play, Brutus sat highest in Shakespeare's heart, and therefore, he is drawn with a greater consistency: to Caesar the poet gave homage, but to Brutus, love.<sup>2</sup> Brutus is a forecast of Hamlet, and therefore, a reflection of Shakespeare: the two characters were created by the same mood of the artist, and almost at the same time: that mood is best expressed by the words of Hamlet: "Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart." This "melancholy" I have attempted to explain in the review of "As You Like It"; but see also Section 28.

The parallel between Brutus and Hamlet is easy to draw, and need not detain us long: Hamlet's is perhaps the keener intellect, but both, though prompt to act on occasion, are students, thinkers, and philosophers, rather than men of action: both are possessed by a moral recti-

<sup>1</sup> What delightful dramatic irony in a later reflection of Brutus (V. i. 104): "I do find it cowardly," etc., "For fear of what *might* fall," etc.

<sup>2</sup> At the end of the play, it is with the audience as it was with the dramatist; Caesar may live in our wonder and astonishment, but Brutus in our hearts—his is the crowning position at the close.

tude which is sensitive, and may be insecure; both were unfit for the task imposed by destiny: both, partly on account of the melancholy referred to above, were given to reflection, introspection, soliloquy: both debated the question of suicide: and to both

Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream.<sup>1</sup>

and lastly, each makes that confession of faith which we are accustomed to look for from the higher philosophic mind—"There's a divinity that shapes our ends"—"The providence of some high powers That govern us below."

A parallel must now be drawn between Brutus and Caesar, which has an important bearing on the poet's dealings in dramatic justice, Nemesis, *Ureia*, and the like: each falls a victim to a specious word: Caesar to his own name—"If my name were liable to fear"; Brutus to the name of honour—"I love The name of honour more than I fear death"; each, in fact, worships his name as something above chance and change.

I need not multiply quotations, for every reader of the play must be aware that this flickering wisp of a name lures each character to his doom (and there is something like it in Portia's "Cato's daughter"); I may, however, point to the exquisite dramatic irony that lies in Mark Antony's adroit and deadly iteration—"Brutus is an honourable man."

Next we notice that another character in the play must suffer from Shakespeare's purpose of lending lustre to the deed of Brutus, for Cassius, like Caesar, is painted at the outset with colours that are unduly dark: we can have little respect for the man who deliberately seduces the

<sup>1</sup> With this important quotation we should compare Hamlet's speeches and soliloquies *passim*, Macbeth's "If it were done" (I, viii, 1-28), and the speech of the King to Laertes ("Hamlet," IV, vii, 115-124).

honourable mettle of his friend, and still less when Brutus is that friend. Cassius, therefore, like Caesar, will gain in dignity and glory when the play has run its half course: his petty jealousies, moreover, merge themselves in patriotism: and we are not altogether surprised that the honour reserved for him in death—"The last of all the Romans, fare thee well," should so nearly resemble the tribute paid by Antony to Brutus and Caesar.

Apart from all this, Cassius is a foil to Brutus—a man of the world, and practical, as opposed to a man of the highest moral purity, and a dreamer. Antony is another man of the world, and another foil to Brutus: but he differs from Cassius in being fond of pleasure, and he is an adventurer rather than a politician. Both men, however, owe allegiance to a stronger and a grander nature than their own, Cassius to Brutus, Antony to Caesar: and herein lies their chief virtue and their chief dramatic interest. But as in "Hamlet" (see next Section), so also in "Julius Caesar," the poet takes refuge for one erring moment in that old treacherous doctrine: "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." I speak of a passing impression or wish for the convention, as was explained on page 142.

The mood, therefore, was momentary—momentary as that other belief, "Frailty, thy name is woman"; at least Shakespeare is ready to admit with Plutarch that "good education and the company of virtuous men have some power to reform the defect of nature" in women; and there is more than Plutarch and more than theatrical purpose in that most splendid of all poetic tributes to the dual perfectness of our human being:

You are my true and honourable wife,  
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops  
That visit my sad heart.

Naturally, therefore, my review of the characters will



close with some reference to "Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia."<sup>1</sup>

We have seen (p. 253) that Shakespeare often creates a female figure to stand as the counterpart of some leading male character; and as Volumnia in another Roman play is Coriolanus over again in woman's form, so Portia in this play may be regarded as a female Brutus; but she further serves to bring out some finer traits in the character of her husband. Moreover, she stands in the same relation to her husband as he does to his country, the relation, that is, of self-sacrificing devotion.

It is somewhat less to our purpose to note that Portia, like Ophelia, "falls distract," and dies a self-inflicted death; but we take occasion to remark that these fair lives were wrecked on the accustomed rock—the fate or the foibles of a man. And if with some show of justice woman has been called a destroying angel, man surely must be called with yet greater justice a destroying devil; we shall find it somewhere in Shakespeare—"A woman, naturally born to fears."

Of another character in the play, felt rather than seen, I shall speak again in my review of "Hamlet"; here I may mention that this character also is to be found in Plutarch—"the ghost that appeared unto Brutus," and "shewed plainly that the gods were offended with the murder of Caesar."

## (28) HAMLET, 1602

### *Historical Particulars*

The story of Amhlaide, Amleth, or Hamlet, is of Scandinavian origin, and dates from the tenth century. These northern legends, which we can only mention, are the groundwork of Saxo's story of Amlethus, but the Danish historian enriched them with other material, such as the

<sup>1</sup> "Merchant of Venice" (I. i. 166).

legendary account of the Brutus of early Rome. As to Belleforest's version of Saxo, that Shakespeare read this in the original French appears to me certain; and he would almost as certainly have made use of a lost play on the subject of Hamlet, by Kyd; in this, which had Seneca for model, a ghost appears crying "Revenge." Shakespeare may also have taken hints from another play by Kyd, "The Spanish Tragedy" (licensed 1592), which deals with a father's revenge for a murdered son, contains a play within the play, and also includes a ghost among its *dramatis personae*.

Coming now to Shakespeare's play, we find the following entry in the Stationers' Registers under date July 26th, 1602:

"A booke called The Revenge of Hamlett Prince [of] Denmarke, as yt was latelie Acted by the Lord Chamberleyne his servantes."

The next year there was published in Quarto "The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke By William Shake-speare. As it hath beene diverse times acted by his Highnesse servants in the Cittie of London: as also in the two Vniversities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elsewhere. At London printed for N. L. [Nicholas Ling] and John Trundell. 1603."

We may note that "the Lord Chamberlain's servants" of the Register have become "his Highness' servants," for James has been made King of England, and it is conjectured that Hamlet was performed at the Universities in honour of the King's accession, more especially as the play deals not ingloriously with the native land of Anne of Denmark.

The relation of this Quarto to the "Hamlet" of the Folio is doubtful. Most probably it was an ill-reported version of Shakespeare's first draft of the play, amended afterwards by reference to the original; possibly also by a further reference to Kyd; but this is improbable, and I

regard the copy as Shakespeare's work, more or less mutilated. This short surreptitious version of 2,143 lines gives nevertheless the substance of Shakespeare's play, but it makes many changes, some of which are not easily accounted for, though I think they are mostly due to Shakespeare's after-revision of his work; among these we notice that Yorick's skull has been twelve years in the ground, and not twenty-three; that the "duke" and "duchess" (in later editions King and Queen) of the "Mousetrap" have been married forty years, not thirty; and that Polonius is Corambis Reynaldo is Montano, and Osric "a Bragart Gentleman."

In 1604 another Quarto (thrice reprinted) appeared with the title—"The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke. By William Shakespeare. Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie. At London, printed by I. R. for N. L. . . . 1604." Here I. R. stands for James Roberts who, as is most likely, also printed the Quarto of 1603.

This Quarto of 1604 represents—but by no means perfectly—the drama as revised by its author; it is in some respects more complete than the Folio version, which is slightly altered and shortened for stage purposes, and omits more than two hundred lines, as compared with less than one hundred omitted by the Quarto of 1604. The most noteworthy omissions in this Quarto are the two following: but I may illustrate the first by quoting successively from Quarto 1603, Quarto 1604, and the Folio:

(a) Q. 1603, II. 2:

*Ham.* How comes it that they trauell? Do they grow restie?

*Gil.* No my Lord, their reputation holds as it was wont.

*Ham.* How then?

*Gil.* Yfaith, my Lord, noueltie carries it away,  
For the principall publike audience that  
Came to them, are turned to priuate playes,  
And to the humour of children.

(b) Q. 1604 :

*Ham.* How chances it they travaille ? their residence both in reputation and profit was better both wayes.

*Nos.* I thinke their inhibition, comes by the meanes of the late innouasion.

*Ham.* Doe they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the Citty ; are they so followed ?

*Ros.* No, indeede are they not.

(c) Folio 1623 follows the Quarto of 1604, and then adds as far as "Hercules and his load too" (351-379).

It will be seen that Quarto 1604 omits the reference to the boy actors—"a companie of boyes," established at the Blackfriars Theatre by Henry Evans in 1600. The omission seems due to the fact that in 1603 Shakespeare's company became the King's servants, while in 1604 the boy-actors became "The Children of her Majesty's Revels"; at such a time, therefore, the players would refrain from censure of the "eyrie of children."

I should add that the word "inhibition" in the above passages (b) and (c) is probably without contemporary significance, and may bear its occasional meaning (quite in Shakespeare's manner) of "difficulty" (due to the "innovation"); otherwise it may refer to the plague of 1603. Further, the Folio passage adds a possible reference to the dramatic quarrel made famous by Jonson's "Poetaster" on the one side, and Marston's and Dekker's "Satiromastix" on the other.

The second omission in Quarto 1604 also finds an explanation in contemporary events; in the dialogue between Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in II. ii, 252 *sqq.*, we have "there are many confines, wards, and dungeons; Denmark being one o' the worst"; this allusion to the queen's native country, together with some of the context, would naturally be omitted in 1604.

To complete this division of my subject I should mention that Shakespeare as usual derives his dramatic material from sources more numerous and recondite than the



list of his main originals would imply; for instance, of the names of his *dramatis personae*, while Gertrude is Saxo's "Gerutha," Ophelia and Montano are derived from the "Arcadia" of Sannazaro; and Fortinbras is probably "Fortebras," or "Strong arm" (cf. Ferumbras, Fierabras). As to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in an old German album preserved at the Royal Public Library at Stuttgart, there are found on the same page the following autograph signatures with the date 1577: "Jörgen RossenKrantz," "P. Guldenstern." To this we add that there was an ambassador Rosencrantz in England at the time of the accession of James I.

For the date of the play we can only approximate, and suggest 1602; but the first draft was probably earlier.

The time of the action, which presents some difficulties, is thus given by Daniel: 1st day, Act I. Sc. i.—iii.; 2nd, I. iv. and v.; interval about two months; 3rd day, II. i. and ii.; 4th, III. i.-iv., IV. i.-iii.; 5th, IV. iv.; interval—a week? 6th day, IV. v.-vii.; 7th, V. i., ii.

### *Critical Remarks*

"Hamlet" is perhaps the most popular work in our literature, and the most famous example of literary art that the world has produced. It may also be the greatest, but that question is less profitable to ask or to answer; yet the qualities that give to the play its world-wide popularity we must endeavour to ascertain as far as the scope of this manual will permit.

Let us point out some of its claims to distinction; it belongs to the highest form of literature and art, the poetic drama; it is excellent on the stage, excellent to read; it contains a play within the play; it aspires to all that is noble, spurns all that is base, and bows down before Providence; it reaches from this world to the next; it sounds the deepest abyss of thought, it ascends to the highest heaven of imagination; it is full of pro-

verbal philosophy and quotable common-sense; it has strength and beauty, pathos and humour, wit and wisdom; and it is a play in which, as in "Twelfth Night," the poetic form is vitalized by the dramatic spirit.

More than all this, the hero stands alone; in the other tragedies other heroic figures occupy the stage; here the leading character is the drama; and that drama is the tragedy not of ambition, nor jealousy, nor ingratitude; it is the most inevitable and the most awful of all tragedies, the tragedy of human life; we might almost say that Hamlet stands for Humanity, with its burden greater than it can bear; we are not all Macbeths, nor Lears, nor Othellos; but we are all Hamlets, even as was Shakespeare.

It is the tragedy of life, and of all that life can give or take away—love, joy, sorrow, death, hope; of love with its mighty instincts, sexual or social, the honey of music vows, filial affection, motherhood, wifehood, friendship; of joy in this goodly frame, the earth, and in man the beauty of the world; of sorrow over such a quintessence of dust; of death, the beginning of new life, the passing through nature to eternity; of hope, for there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow, and there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of even in the philosophy of Shakespeare.

Love, joy, sorrow, death, hope, these are the things belonging to the tragedy—or rather, to the tragi-comedy—of life; all are in this play; and they are here idealized into a new, beautiful, eternal Being.

And if in the play, so are they also embodied in the person of Hamlet; no wonder that the dramatist often forgot the theatre<sup>1</sup> as he worked at the character; and that the character was never finished, while the play became inordinately reflective and inordinately long. But

<sup>1</sup> "Hamlet" as printed in the Folio was probably shortened for theatrical purposes; and the text, as we have it, is mostly shortened on the modern stage.

here I may quote from my "Handbook to Tennyson" (p. 301): "Hamlet is not a consistent character. To begin with, he is more thoughtful and less obviously mad in the later play; and in this, as the drama proceeds, he grows in years, in disposition, in doubtfulness between sanity and insanity; 'I know my words are wild,'—so he, too, might say; for with words he 'unpacks his heart'; his words, and not his actions, are governed most by Shakespeare's soul. How long and how numerous are his soliloquies; what a personal interest he takes in the stage; what faith he has lost in woman; how he ponders over the problems of evil and good, of life and death. How sad he is, and with what mysterious sadness!—'Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart.' As the dramatist worked at his character, he drew nearer to him and nearer, gave him more of his own eight-and-thirty years, a maturer mind, a deeper reflectiveness; he is sad most of all with Shakespeare's sadness, and lest he shall reflect the artist too closely Shakespeare drives him to and fro on the verge of madness."

On the other hand, we must dismiss the notion that Shakespeare, when he created Hamlet, brought to his work any purpose of sketching his own character or of dramatizing his criticism of life. When he wrote a play, he did it partly for his own diversion, his artistic delight, and partly to supply the theatre with good acting, and it may be, the public with good reading. He set about his task, not with the design of embodying some abstract idea or an emotion of his own—that would be incidental—but, almost without exception, by re-handling a story or drama already existing. More might follow; indeed, it could not be otherwise; and in this instance, as he fashioned afresh the coarser figure of Saxo or Kyd, he unconsciously created for all time what I have called above the impersonation of his own and of universal humanity. So Goethe began

<sup>1</sup> For this melancholy of Hamlet, see pages 241 and 248.

his "Faust" long before he could make it autobiographical, and Milton had sketched "Paradise Lost" more than a generation before his own fortunes could become part of his poem. I may add that "Hamlet" is to some extent a drama of disillusion, and for the first time in Shakespeare wit is poignant, and humour (for Hamlet, like his creator, is a humorist) has to smile through its tears.

But our sketch of the character of Hamlet must be drawn, in the first instance, from the figure which tradition and narrative and the stage had supplied to the poet. The hero of the old Norse legend is recast by the Danish historian, who gives him subtlety of intellect, and makes him feign madness like the legendary Brutus of early Rome. The disguise is crude, and takes the form of farcical antics (such as speaking in riddles or crowing like a cock or riding a horse tail foremost); and it was the process of refining upon this assumed madness that most of all determined, and, I may add, disguised the character of Shakespeare's Hamlet. But there was another Brutus dear to Shakespeare's craft and to his heart, a Brutus who, as we have shown in our survey of "Julius Caesar," comes nearest to Hamlet among all the characters of Shakespeare, and gives him, in fact, his habit of soliloquy and reflection; in brief, therefore, as regards stage history, Hamlet, as we know him, is a compound of the earlier and the later Brutus of Rome. This is no idle fancy, but an incontestable fact; for on each Brutus a task was imposed, which the one was forced to delay through a period of assumed madness,<sup>1</sup> and by the other was undertaken with so many philosophic misgivings that

<sup>1</sup> "Hearing that his own brother had been put to death by his uncle, (Brutus) resolved to leave nothing in his intellect that might be dreaded by the King, and thus to be secure in contempt where there was to be but little protection in justice." So Edgar in "King Lear" feigned madness; it placed him in a position of advantage like that of the court jester who might look on at the game of life and rebuke or laugh at with impunity even the King himself.



the interim between the acting and the first motion was like a hideous dream. It would not let this later Brutus ("Julius Caesar," II. i. 237-256) eat nor talk nor sleep; he was a changed man; his wife scarce knew him; he stared upon her ungently and dismissed her with an angry wafture; his brow was sad, and his heart; he went about musing and sighing with his arms across. With Hamlet it was the same, though, to his sensitive morality, the shock—his mother's defection—was more severe; his melancholy, at least in some degree, was like his madness, a "transformation" (II. ii. 5); latent from the first, it proclaimed itself when his mother and his dream of love were snatched from him; he lost all his mirth (II. ii. 307-8), and fell into a sadness (II. ii. 147); and this is the only difference between him and Brutus that we need take into account—his distrust of the woman he loved was due partly, at least, to the fact that she had turned traitor to herself and to him.<sup>1</sup> But we

<sup>1</sup> "Hamlet," II. ii. 109, 108, "I did repel his letters," *sqq.* But this, it will be urged, is a matter of opinion; and in no play, as I may have to repeat later, must we trust less to the text and more to our impressions. Still, we may at least supplement our impressions by a reference to the text; and I will give two examples out of the very large number that go to make up my conclusions here and elsewhere. In the Quarto of 1603, Ophelia gives her father a *sensible* letter from Hamlet *before* his madness; Shakespeare saw that he must disguise this too open treachery; therefore in his revision he makes Ophelia give her father a *mad* letter *after* the assumed madness of Hamlet; and thus she may appear to be acting for her lover's good. But the poet removed only half of the difficulty; for Polonius adds, "My daughter . . . more above, hath his solicitings, As they fell out by time, and means and place, All given to mine ear"; and this statement, in conjunction with II. ii. 130-151, II. i. 108-110, and yet other passages, cannot but change our impression of Ophelia's treachery into conviction; and we think of Desdemona, who loved under far more desperate conditions, and "deceived her father" ("Othello," I. iii. 294). Again, there are critics who urge in Ophelia's defence that she "never told her love"; this is partly owing to Shakespeare's twice-repeated "of late" (*i.e.*, "the love-making was quite recent," I. iii. 91 and 99; yet we contrast, "have longed *long*" in III. i. 94); and the expression does not occur in the Quarto. But this time the poet has not even half removed his difficulty, for we do not read "he hath of late made a *tender* of his affection," but, *many tenders*—

may add that in regard to the sadness of Hamlet, Shakespeare's fellow-feeling made him more wondrous kind even than when he created afresh that noblest Roman of them all, whose bones desired rest, and had but laboured to attain it.

But Ophelia has yet another part to play; for the enemies of Saxo's Amleth, wishing to learn his intent and the real state of his mind, made his foster-sister an instrument to betray him; and thus Polonius loosed his daughter on Hamlet. But, further, we shall find Horatio in both Saxo and the story of Brutus, for Amleth's foster-brother warned him of the design of his enemies, and Cassius, "the last of all the Romans" (Plutarch), had been worthy of the love of Brutus.

And now we have collected these fundamental elements in Shakespeare's creation of Hamlet, namely, a task imposed, assumed madness, a reflective habit, melancholy, love, friendship; and thus, as usual, the main outlines of the dramatic figure in Shakespeare are foreshadowed in the library or the theatre, or, as it sometimes happens, in his own previous writings.

Beyond this I do not think it worth while to carry my analysis; these fundamental elements are unimpeachable, and on them Shakespeare built the character and the play. But I must add that as the poet modified these elements they sometimes led him astray; and I must return to the passage quoted above from my "Handbook to Tennyson," and repeat that the evolution of Hamlet—if completed—is not consistent; and this fact may partly account for the many volumes that have been written on

"very oft of late given private time to you"; and the defence again breaks down; for a girl who received many gifts given with vows of sweetest breath, who was bounteous of her presence, and listened time after time to words of love, has accepted her lover, and something more. Thus, as we have seen so often, a study of Shakespeare's originals and of his first essays is our surest guide to a discernment of his difficulties and of his measure of success in meeting them.

the play or its central figure. I am most unwilling to add to their number. And indeed, the above passage sums up researches and reflections that extended over years, and I shall do better service if I point to one or two of the inconsistencies which drove me to that brief estimate. I ~~may~~ begin by referring to the footnote on page 270, after which I shall venture to avoid details and present only conclusions. We seem to have two Hamlets *before* the murder—"young Hamlet" of the "school in Wittenberg," fond of martial exercise, of plays and play acting, a boon companion<sup>1</sup> and a merry,<sup>2</sup> the glass of fashion and the mould of form; and then we have the older Hamlet,<sup>3</sup> especially of Act V., who for three years ("seaven," says Quarto 1), has taken philosophic note of a change in the relation between rich and poor, who has been a man of weakness and melancholy, *such a spirit* ("such spirits," Folio; "such men," Quarto 1) as a ghost might easily mislead. How, then, shall any speak in exact terms of what the king calls Hamlet's "transformation"; what was its nature, its extent, and the like? And as to Hamlet's madness, it was assumed in order to hoodwink this king, who nevertheless at once pronounces upon it:—"What he spake, though it lacked form a little . . . was *not* like madness."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, if turning wearily from the thousands of pages devoted to this subject, we ask Hamlet himself whether he was really mad or no, he will answer from passages too numerous to quote, that he was, and that he was not. This is Shakespeare's art, say some; Hamlet did not know, and the creator of Hamlet did not wish us to know; but I am

<sup>1</sup> II. ii. 294-296

<sup>2</sup> II. ii. 307, 308.

<sup>3</sup> Thirty years of age. Shakespeare was thirty in 1594. A man of thirty then was as old as a man of forty now, and "forty winters" then was a picturesque phrase for something like old age. As in other matters, so with regard to Hamlet's age, Shakespeare has not quite succeeded in obliterating his first intention.

<sup>4</sup> So Saturninus of "Titus Andronicus": "His feigned ecstasies shall be no shelter to these outrages." See also next note (p. 273).

inclined to venture one step further, and suggest that Shakespeare himself did not know; his habit and his love of ambiguity—for so I am convinced—baffled even himself.<sup>1</sup>

The fact is that, in most of Shakespeare's plays, "Macbeth," for example, we have to admit discrepancies, especially in some minor points,<sup>2</sup> but we are content if our *main impressions* are consistent; and in regard to the character of Hamlet, my main impressions may be found elsewhere in these pages.

Let us turn now to consider Ophelia; again the outlines are sketched to the poet's hand; she plays the spy upon her lover; he knows it, and with loving pity pronounces her doom; this at least was Shakespeare's first intention. But if Hamlet, as I have endeavoured to show, is an inconsistent creation, Ophelia, as I venture to think, is yet more inconsistent; indeed (though Bertram and Cressida come near to this in comedy), I doubt whether any character in Shakespeare is more completely a victim to the requirements of tragedy. We may or may not have had two Hamlets, but we certainly have no less than three Ophelias. There is first the perfect heroine, lovely and lovable, strong and true, who would have made the tragedy altogether impossible, she who could command to the death a brother's affection, and before whom a noble prince bowed with such passionate devotion that forty thousand brothers could not with all their quantity of love make up his sum; who rewarded him, moreover, with a love so entire, so

<sup>1</sup> Something like Hamlet's is the case of Titus Andronicus, whose feigned madness seems to bring him nearer to the verge of actual insanity than his own mere troubles might have done. Doubtless what Shakespeare intended was that Hamlet should assume madness, that and nothing more; but the poet within the dramatist became so absorbed in the complex process of evolution that this and other theatrical purposes were modified or lost sight of (see also quotation from my "Handbook to Tennyson," p. 268). Later it is different; no such psychological uncertainties perplex reader or actor in "King Lear," though some have doubted the half-madness of the Fool.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, since the marriage, Hamlet had "foregone all customary exercises," yet had "been in continual practice" of fencing.

intense, and so divine, that first her mind and then her body were laid as a sacrifice upon its altar. This is the Ophelia we place first in our love and our remembrance, and of her we could write volumes; chaste as ice and pure as snow; a "green girl," said her foolish father, and for once, let us admit, he spoke to some purpose, but the wording might have been more graceful: "Pure as the lines of green that streak the white of the first snowdrops' inner leaves"; a maiden innocent as innocence, childlike as childhood, yet very woman of very woman, whom a queen would gladly take to her as a daughter, whose bride-bed a queen would have decked with flowers: who was importuned with the love of Hamlet in honourable fashion, besmirched with no soil, no cautel: who returned his love with such maiden modesty that the selfish warning of her brother, the coarse injunctions, the impertinent inquiries of her father, the fantastic insinuations of her half-frenzied lover, could not convict her of one evil thought: she in whose grave that brother and that lover contended for loving masterdom: she from whose fair and unpolluted flesh may violets spring. Then there is the Ophelia who (Hamlet-like) makes tragedy more than possible, doll and dupe and dastard, who first deserts her lover and then betrays him: of her I have neither will nor patience to say more: nor more than this of the third Ophelia—Ophelia the worldling, who, if a creature of Shakespeare's age and world, is certainly not again to be found in Shakespeare's plays:<sup>1</sup> she who, in the play scene, meets Hamlet's coarse mockery not even with the reproof of silence, but rather with a subtle encouragement.<sup>2</sup>

This threefold character, I repeat, is Shakespeare's

<sup>1</sup> Compare her with Miranda, for instance, or Viola, or Rosalind, or Juliet, or even Helena. See also pp. 175, 176.

<sup>2</sup> The retort to her brother (I. iii. 45-51) and the snatches of song in IV. v. may be defended, but this conversation in III. ii. cannot be defended; not even if she thinks Hamlet mad, nor if we regard his language as unconventional and subserving a high dramatic purpose.

Ophelia; and not altogether unlike Ophelia's is the tripartite character of Caliban, where in one being we have embodied—or rather, an attempt to embody—the barbarian child of nature, the debased negro slave, and the mediæval half-born monstrosity.

About this time Shakespeare seems to have lost some of his faith in woman; hence—partly at least—such characters as the second and third of the above-mentioned Ophelias. Proportionately, the poet insists on the value and the virtue of friendship between man and man, and from “frailty thy name is woman,” we turn to “I will wear him in my heart's core.” But there is a word more to be said about Horatio; this *classical* exaltation of friendship over love is almost admitted by Shakespeare, for Horatio is “more an antique Roman than a Dane”; and let us be thankful that under normal conditions the poet was more modern and more accurate in his views; Cassius, another “antique Roman,” and Brutus, were “lovers” (“Julius Caesar,” V. i. 95) in the Elizabethan sense; but what Portia was to Brutus may be read in the lines quoted on page 261.

Of the other characters in the play, Laertes may be regarded as a foil to Hamlet, and his freedom from compunction—I should rather say reflection<sup>1</sup>—makes him capable of prompt action. Polonius the dotard, full of wise saws from Lyly, is the comic element in the play. Therefore, Shakespeare does the old man some injury; as yet his regard for theatrical precedent is often stronger

<sup>1</sup> For if we ask the question how far did any sense of right and wrong deter from his purpose the man who promised the ghost that he would sweep to his revenge with wings as swift as meditation, or the thoughts of love, our answer must be this, “not much, if at all.” As usual in this play, we judge from impressions rather than from quotations which will range themselves for and against; and we add that whatever conscientious scruples Hamlet may retain seem due chiefly to his reflective habit. (Conscience in the famous soliloquy is not the moral faculty, but reasoning reflection—the “pale cast of thought.”)

than his respect for higher art; but with maturer taste he will right the wrong; he will give us the perfect morality of "The Tempest," and its "Holy Gonzalo, honourable man."

I must now say a word or two on the part played by the ghost. This excursion into worlds not realized, this reaching from the seen to the unseen, from the natural to the supernatural, is an extension of the idealizing process which is both profitable and delightful. It gives a visual interpretation to the workings of Nemesis, or better, a real presence to ideal providence. Ghosts, therefore, such as this which held commerce with Hamlet, or that other which announced his doom to Brutus, are interpreters between the gods and men; and their presence in tragedy is not only dramatically appropriate and effective, but also morally elevating. We cannot be too often reminded that the infinite is greater than the finite; that Hamlet's "special providence" is by no means inconsistent with the strictest operation of natural or supernatural law—"For if he thunder by law, the thunder is yet his voice."

Or if our over wise but not over modest generation has "left us nothing to believe in, worth The pains of putting into learned rhyme," it was otherwise in the days of Shakespeare, when you might take a ghost's word for a thousand pound; at least those days were not so far removed from the belief in ghosts as to make such apparitions ridiculous on the boards of a theatre; on the contrary, this mode of representing the spiritual was regarded as authentic, and to Hamlet's audience the voice of the ghost was as the voice of heaven.

But of the ghostly visitants in these dramas and of the supernatural theme generally, I shall speak at greater length in the chapter on the Art of Shakespeare. I may remark, however, that this famous ghost in Hamlet was probably suggested by the apparition in the play of Thomas Kyd (see p. 263), which came upon the stage cry-

ing "Revenge"; besides which our poet no doubt gladly repeats the experiment he has recently made of "Caesar's spirit ranging for revenge," the original of which he found in Plutarch.

From this glance at the characters we turn to notice other features of the play, and we find it remarkable as containing some of the best examples of Shakespeare's more rhetorical prose; for example, the speech of Hamlet in II. ii. 306-326. It gives us, moreover, in II. ii. 415-482, what is probably a relic of Shakespeare's earlier work, containing, as usual, much that is excellent amid much that is bombast; and the speech takes us back to the turgid style in vogue among Shakespeare's early contemporaries. Moreover, in the "Mousetrap," the play within the play, we have an example of the rhyming tragic drama from which Shakespeare so narrowly escaped.

We noticed in our review of "Love's Labour's Lost" that the poet, especially in his earlier plays, guards himself against the prevalent tendency to an abuse of language and the forms of literary expression by experimenting with some doubtful style of his contemporaries, by ridiculing their worst excesses, by bringing on some character who will humour this or that mode of speech to the top of his bent, and, indeed, by making constant apologies for fine writing. This is partly true of the verse experiments mentioned in the former paragraph; but, more certainly we have the affected speech of Osric, and such passages as V. i. 257-266, V. ii. 30-47, II. ii. 400-412, III. ii. 67 ("Something too much of this"), III. iv. 50-54, III. iv. 210, and the like.

Noteworthy also in this play are the remarks on the drama, the theatre, and acting; indeed they are almost obtrusive, and the introduction of the players in II. ii. 290-296 seems altogether forced and irrelevant; but the awkwardness, shall we say, was that of Rosencrantz rather than of Shakespeare; at any rate the poet tries to explain



it away in III. i. 16-20. Of profound interest, moreover, is the poet's criticism of contemporary life and manners; but my remaining space must be devoted to an examination of one or two of the many passages (p. 33) that even in this tragedy of reflection must be regarded as excrescent from the true dramatic growth; present in not a few of the plays of Shakespeare, these passages are most abundant in *Hamlet*; they stand out from the context much as an ornamental simile does, as opposed to a simile that is merely illustrative or explanatory. The first of my examples is the description of the death of Ophelia, which some have condemned as subserving no good dramatic purpose, as being improbable, and unsuited to the Queen who gives it, as being too botanic, a Stratford scene in which the poet takes conscious delight, and so forth. Perhaps there is something valid in these objections; yet, dramatically, at any rate, the passage relieves the tragic tension, and I should not care to know the man who would cut out from his copy of "*Hamlet*" this exquisite idyll.

The next, the advice of Polonius to Laertes, is not so easily defended; and my first remark is this—but for the fact that Shakespeare found the substance of many of these maxims in Lyly's "*Euphues*,"<sup>1</sup> the speech would not have been so long, nor would it contain such an admixture of shallow worldly prudence and deep spiritual wisdom. But I neither admit on the one hand that Shakespeare when he wrote it intended that every word, nor even the general tenour, should illustrate the fussy,

<sup>1</sup> Burghley's ten precepts to his son Robert have also been mentioned. But I cannot help thinking that Shakespeare had been reading Bacon's "*Colours of Good and Evil*"; for example, where this writer quotes "*Maxime omnium teipsum revere*" ("This above all, to thine own self be true"). This is truer still of "*To be or not to be*," as the student will discover if he compares "*Hamlet*," III. i. 75-82, with "*The Colours*," VI. See also review of "*Measure for Measure*." I may add that these two passages in "*Hamlet*" when closely examined yield results like those obtained on pages 39-46 of this volume.

foolish dotage of Polonius; nor, on the other hand, that he merely dragged in all he could of the passages in "Euphues" that happened to catch his fancy: this, surely, will be the truth; we have before us the result of a combination of both these causes—a dramatic purpose modified by ready-made material. This, which seems the best explanation of ambiguity in the characters, is true of many of these passages, and possibly of the remaining one we have now to examine, the famous soliloquy "To be or not to be."

It is not easy to throw light on the palpable obscurities of this speech; it is perhaps the most striking, among countless examples, of Shakespeare's habit of expressing in language more or less ambiguous a series of thoughts from other writers. To begin with the ambiguity, "To be or not to be" is a cant phrase of the schools used with reference to the future state, but as regards the play, it comes midway between the reflections on suicide in I, ii, 129-131, and "the craven scruple of thinking too precisely on the event" (IV. iv. 40, 41), and includes them both. From this point the course of thought is repeatedly lost sight of amid the tangle of quotations, though at times we may detect a mingling of the three main reflections—futility, suicide, and "this thing" that is yet "to do" (IV. iv. 114). I have no space to analyze the speech further; I will only call attention to the wonderful effect of the mere language in all these cases—the sound and symbol as apart from the thought; and though in his later plays the poet is more rapid, more original and more exact, the impression produced by his earlier methods is often—as in the above example—equally striking, sufficient, and profound.

Lastly, while debating these minor points, let us not forget the wider view, the grandeur of the play as a whole; a smaller mind might have given consistency to the characters, or have imposed a conciseness on the

advice of Polonius, or a sequence on original reflections in "To be or not to be," or a dramatic proportion on the Queen's narrative of the death of Ophelia, or a definiteness on the duration of the action; but only Shakespeare could have written "Hamlet."<sup>1</sup>

## (29) TROILUS AND CRESSIDA, 1603

### *Historical Particulars*

The following entry is found in the Register of the Stationers' Company, Feb. 7th, 1602-3: "Mr. Robertes. The booke of Troilus and Cresseda, as yt is acted by my Lo. Chamberlen's men." The "Lo. Chamberlen's men" were Shakespeare's Company, and James Roberts had printed the Second Quarto of "Hamlet" and other plays of Shakespeare; but he seems to have failed in his attempt to print this play—if, as we may suppose, it was Shakespeare's. But on January 28th, 1608-9, another entry appeared: "Richard Bonian and Hen. Walley. A booke called the History of Troylus and Cressida"; and in this year a Quarto was issued with the title: "The | Famous Historie of | Troylus and Cresseid. | *Excellently expressing the beginning* | of their loues, with the conceited wooing | of *Pandarus* Prince of *Licia*. | *Written* by William Shakespeare. | LONDON, | Imprinted by G. Eld for R. Bonian and H. Walley, and | are to be sold at the spred Eagle in Paules | Churchyard, ouer against the | great North doore, | 1609. | "

Some of the copies with a less pretentious title-page contain the announcement, "As it was acted by the King's majesties servants at the Globe." These may be the first issue; the other copies contain an interpolated page bearing a Preface which protests that "you have

<sup>1</sup> We must further remember that however unequal Shakespeare's work may appear when we examine it in part, it is, nevertheless, taken altogether, by far the least unequal and the greatest yet done by any one man,

here a new play, never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of the palm comical; . . . especially this author's comedies that are so framed to the life, that they serve for the most common commentaries of all the actions of our lives, showing such a dexterity and power of wit, that the most displeased with plays are pleased with his comedies. . . . Amongst all there is none more witty than this; . . . And believe this when he is gone and his comedies out of sale, you will scramble for them and set up a new English Inquisition." This preface has many points of interest, some of which are worth quoting, though it is merely an "advertisement" for the publisher, and implies that the "grand possessors" or owners of the MS. were greatly annoyed at its surreptitious appearance in print. Its critical remarks, moreover, are not always reliable, nor its statements founded on fact, for the play was neither new nor unacted—unless the writers are referring to some earlier draft, which had been put upon the stage, but not published; and this version may have concerned itself more with the love story, and less with the Grecian camp. Thus we should account for contradictions in the play, as well as for discrepancies in the presentment of Troilus who—and it is much the same with Hamlet—changes his personality somewhat as the play proceeds.

We next meet with "Troilus and Cressida" in the Folio of 1623. It does not appear in the list of contents, and the Editors seem to have been doubtful where to place it; their first intention was that it should follow "Romeo and Juliet" among the tragedies; ultimately they inserted it between the histories and tragedies.

Apparently the Folio text was based on a MS. revised by Shakespeare and by another after him; while the Quarto represents an earlier, and in some respects more trustworthy copy of the MS.

The chronology of the play is doubtful; possibly the first draft may be dated 1602, and the editions of 1609 may represent an enlarged and revised version. A non-extant play with the same title (1599-1600), which Dekker and Chettle were writing for Henslowe, may have led Shakespeare to his enterprise. It is sometimes thought that his object in writing was to some extent polemical, and that he joined in the war waged by Jonson in 1601-2 against Marston, Dekker, and others; if so, he may ridicule Jonson as Ajax, and Marston as Thersites—"When rank Thersites opes his mastic jaws"—where the word *mastic* may bear a double meaning, one having reference to "Therio-mastix," which was Marston's pseudonym in his "Scourge of Villainy." But we have no clear evidence that Shakespeare engaged in this controversy, which belongs rather to the life of Jonson, and therefore finds a bare mention in this volume. Other slight evidence of date is supplied by affinities with "Hamlet," which are to be discovered in "Troilus and Cressida"; take, for example, the dialogue between Pandarus and Cressida in I. ii. 40-307; as we read this we are irresistibly reminded of Polonius—the figure of the man, his manner of speaking, the matter of his speech. Altogether, in spite of some additions and alterations which are later in style, we may return to the date first proposed, viz., 1602-3.<sup>1</sup>

Turning now to the sources of the play, we find, as we have found so often, two main streams of story: one we trace back to its origin in Chaucer's long and beautiful poem of "Troilus and Cressida," which improves the moral, though it spoils just a little of the art, of Boccaccio's "Filostrato"; this also Shakespeare probably

<sup>1</sup> It has sometimes been supposed that a reference to this play is found in "When he *shakes* his furious *spear*," etc., in a context that deals with Troilus and Cressida (cf. especially IV. iv.) in the dramatic satire "Histriomastix" (before 1599); and if so, the first draft of Shakespeare's play must be earlier.

referred to; and he had also read the later history of Cressida in Henryson's "Testament of Creseide"; Pandarus, I may add, was a creation of Boccaccio, greatly modified by Chaucer. To Boccaccio, moreover, we are indebted for the conversion of Briseida (Homer's *Briseis*) into Cryseida.

The war-story Shakespeare based on Lydgate's "Troy-boke," and Caxton's "Recuyell of the histories of Troye"; for Thersites he was indebted to Chapman's "Homer," which had been published in 1598; and he may have taken hints from Greene's "Euphues, His Censure to Philautus," 1587, and from Ovid's "Metamorphoses," and possibly from some drama unknown to us.

I may add that the Romantic writers modified the classic "tale of Troy divine," especially in their preference of Trojan over Greek; and their influence was no doubt felt by Shakespeare.

The time analysis of the play is: 1st day, I. i. ii. (interval); 2nd day, I. iii., II., III; 3rd day, IV.; V. i. ii. (part); 4th day, V. ii. (part), iii.-x.

### *Critical Remarks*

Although critical appreciation of this drama would be made easier by allowing it to reflect the war of the playwrights which was mentioned in the former section, or to satirise classical learning, or to smile grimly upon Chapman and his idolized Achilles, I shall avoid these subjects altogether. I prefer to base my interpretation on higher and not less plausible motives than those of theatrical or poetical rivalries.

Yet "Troilus and Cressida," if written for the stage, belies its purpose more than any other of the dramas of Shakespeare; this may be due partly to an excess of the reflective tendency which was with difficulty kept under restraint when the poet was writing "Hamlet," and is here allowed freer scope; and partly from the unmanage-

able incongruities of his double theme; the dramatic bond that binds the perjury of Cressida with the death of Hector is a slight one; <sup>1</sup> indeed, though the end of a play is sometimes hastily reached, we have nothing in Shakespeare quite so chaotic as this Fifth Act; some other hand may have tampered with it, or it has not received the poet's final sanction.

The tale of Troilus and Cressida had arrested Shakespeare's attention at any early date; in "The Merchant of Venice" we read how

Troilus . . . mounted the Trojan walls  
And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents  
Where Cressid lay that night ;

and that he had studied more than one version of the story may be gathered from a passage in "Twelfth Night" (III. i. 59-63).

At this point I repeat what was said in my review of "Hamlet"; we must remember that the leading features of a character in Shakespeare, and the main incidents of his drama are derived almost without exception either from some author who preceded him, or, as it may happen, from differences between those authors; or if not from these, then from a more or less vague tradition. This is true of the character of Cressida or of Hector, and will partly account for inconsistencies — real or apparent — in either case; so also with the rest of the characters in this drama, and not a few of the incidents. For example, Cressida is a combination of at least three previous sketches, and the Hector of the popular English stage will explain much that seems grotesque in Shakespeare's presentation of the famous hero of Troy. I need hardly add that in spite of these influences from the past, Shakespeare never fails to give to each character a new and a striking individuality.

The latter event, however, makes room for the resolve of Troilus.

If we seek for the motive of this most perplexing of the dramas, we may perhaps find it in Hamlet—"man delights not me, nor woman neither"; add to this as a preponderating element, "frailty, thy name is woman," and we come as near as possible to the workings of the poet's mind; in "Troilus" the latter quotation reads thus: "Ah! poor our sex" (V. ii. 109). Shakespeare has gained his experience, and his experience has made him sad; the melancholy of Jaques (see p. 268) and of Hamlet enters this play also, though its effects are diffused; Achilles is "lion-sick . . . you may call it melancholy"; Ajax is "melancholy without cause"; even Thersites is only half-concealed by his mask of caricature; and the subject is generally present. But we may conclude this part of our review by indicating the diverging lines of this "melancholy," and this "experience" in the life of Shakespeare; the first follows the sequence—Jaques, Hamlet, Thersites, Timon; the second follows the sequence—Jaques, Hamlet, Ulysses, Prospero; and I need scarcely point out that the latter is the more important. Of course it is possible to make too much of the personal element in Shakespeare's writings, and it varies in degree; there is less, for example, in "Othello"; but it is equally possible to err by ignoring this element altogether; and those who study his work *in its entirety* must catch, I think, an occasional glimpse of the man within the artist.

But, without doubt, the subject of the play is found in its title, "Troilus and Cressida"; and here the motives are obvious; it is best to state them as they occur in the text: "Let all constant men be Troiluses; all false women Cressids; and all brokers-between Pandars"; these we may support with other quotations: "Never did young man fancy (p. 383) With so eternal and so fixed a soul"; "As false as Cressid"; "Hence, broker lackey! ignominy and shame Pursue thy life, and live aye with thy name." We have then, for all time, the ideal of young love in man,



of fickleness in woman, and of the unlovely dotage that parades an effete sensuality. In depicting this last, Shakespeare was successful enough, and it might be worth doing in his day, but see my remarks on Polonius (p. 275). As to Troilus, the picture is not entirely successful, for the guileless and gallant Prince is far too much a dupe at the outset—not of *Cressida*—note the fact—but of Pandarus, but this also belongs to the age. As to this painting of *Cressida*, Shakespeare, as I think, was entirely unsuccessful, he began with the *Cressida* of Chaucer, and ended with Henryson—"the lazar kite of Cressid's kind." But apart from comparison, let us look carefully at Shakespeare's portrait; here is a woman, fair, and pure, and true, such she continues until she is torn from Troilus, her nearest approach to fault is the womanly virtue of "holding off" (I ii 312-321). From her lips, as she leaves Troilus, fall words of the truest, most tender, and most enduring love—"My lord, will you be true?" Perhaps an hour passes, and this woman is being "kissed in general," and Ulysses "sets her down" as one of the "daughters of the game." Nothing could be more utterly impossible—more utterly at variance—than these two women. I need not pass on to the immediate intrigue with Diomed. But how does Chaucer manage? In his poem the love of Troilus and *Cressida* is less lovely—he could not paint young love like Shakespeare—but he prepares us for the revolt with greater skill, yet with evident impatience and doubt.

The morwe com, and goostly for to speke  
 This Diomedes come un to Cresseide,  
 And shortly, lest that ye my tale breke,  
 So well he for him selve spak and seyde,  
 That al hir eyhes sore adoun he leyde

And a little further he writes, "Men seyn, I not,—that she yaf him hir herte."

This is quite a different matter. Chaucer's *Cressida* is

the victim of a determined man; Shakespeare's is a sudden, a willing, and an impossible wanton. If it was the purpose of the dramatist to emphasize her defection, he overreached himself and defeated that purpose. This may be partly accounted for in my remark on *Troilus* on the former page.

Most of the other characters bear labels on their backs, and the labels are often conventional; Thersites is "a scurvy, railing knave";<sup>1</sup> Nestor "he cannot but be wise"; Agamemnon is "the great commander," and so forth; these require no comment; but I cannot help repeating that one of them is labelled "Shakespeare," viz. Ulysses.

No wonder, therefore, that this drama is deep-thoughted beyond the rest; beyond even *Hamlet*; not ethically, perhaps, but socially, politically, and I might add, scientifically. We shall not again hear so much from Shakespeare himself until we reach "*The Tempest*"; but there the thought will be as wide and as lofty as here it is deep.

As to Shakespeare's "*Iliad*" in miniature, which is the background of the *Cressida* story, it is wonderfully contrived in such a narrow compass; and whatever may seem burlesque in it belongs more to the age of Shakespeare than to the writer.

### (30) MEASURE FOR MEASURE, 1604

#### *Historical Particulars*

As far as we know, this play was first printed in the Folio of 1623, where the text presents many difficulties. The figure in II. iv. 24, "So play," etc., seems to have been imitated in the "*Myrrha*" of W. Barksted, 1607; and we have possible allusions to the accession of James I in I. i. 68 *sqq.*, and II. iv. 27 *sqq.* Further, the forged entry in the accounts of the "Revels" gives the year 1604,

<sup>1</sup> *Troilus* and *Thersites* have some resemblance to *Timon* and *Apemantus*.

which is probably very near the true date of the play. It certainly belongs to the "Hamlet" period,<sup>1</sup> both as regards manner and matter, and it has affinities with "Troilus and Cressida," "Othello," and "All's Well that Ends Well."

Shakespeare's immediate authority was George Whetstone's "Promos and Cassandra," published in 1578. This play in two parts attempts to introduce order into the English drama which it had found too much "out of order"—so says the Dedication; but Shakespeare gave more attention to the materials it supplied than to the principles it professed to illustrate; some of these materials—"The vertuous Behaviours of a chaste Ladye"—are set forth in its long title-page. Four years later Whetstone re-told the story in prose ("Heptameron of Civil Discourses," 1582).

But the Italian novelist, Cinthio, from whom Shakespeare was to take his Othello, had already twice told the story of Whetstone; we find it in a tragedy, "Epitia," and in the "Hecatommithi" (Dec. VIII, Nov. 5). On this novel, which may also have contributed to "Measure for Measure," Whetstone made little advance; but Shakespeare after his wont re-creates to such moral and artistic purpose that his own comparison, "Hyperion to a Satyr," is both apt and just if applied to his resulting play. Cinthio's "Epitia," though untranslated, may also have given him some help; from it he probably took the name Angela, which he slightly changed in spelling.

The extent to which Shakespeare transformed his original will be understood if I mention that in Whetstone's long and clumsy drama, Cassandra, who corresponds to Isabella, forfeits her honour to save her brother's life; and his "Heptameron," where she is compared to Lucretia, is an attempt to justify her conduct.

<sup>1</sup> For a detail, cf. the curious figure "skins the vice o' the top" (II. ii. 136) with "skin and film the ulcerous place" ("Hamlet," III. iv. 147).

The time analysis is: 1st day, I. i. Interval. 2nd day, I. ii.-IV. ii. 3rd day, IV. ii.-iv. 4th day, IV. v, vi.; V.

*Critical remarks*

The main motive of this play may be found in its title; "Measure for measure must be answered" (3 Henry VI, II. vi. 55); it was death for death in the earlier play, and though the fine is remitted, it is "death for death" here (V. i. 16); for "where the evill is derived from a man's own fault, there all strikes deadly inwardes and suffocateth."<sup>1</sup> But, adds Bacon, "the reprehension of this colour is first in respect of hope, for reformation of our faultes is in *nostra potestate*." Therefore Shakespeare pardons Angelo, for sorrow sticks deep in his penitent heart.

There is a good deal of philosophy in all the plays of Shakespeare; there is most in the three plays, "Hamlet," "Measure for Measure," and "Troilus and Cressida"—problem plays, I might almost call them. "Hamlet," as I have pointed out, is Shakespeare's philosophy and criticism of life in general, but embodied in the person of one individual; in the other two plays, though we have the Duke in one and Ulysses in the other, the philosophy is more special; in the first it is the philosophy of morals, notably in the light of the new Puritanism; in the second, of politics and society.

Appreciation of these three plays—we may add, of Shakespeare—is impossible without an acquaintance with the writings of Shakespeare's great contemporary, Bacon. In this volume I cannot always support a statement with an illustration, for the subject is vast and details must sometimes be sacrificed; but it may encourage the student if I direct him to Bacon's "Colours of Good and Evil" and his "Meditationes sacrae" and the earlier "Essays,"

<sup>1</sup> "Colours of Good and Evil," viii.

which I think Shakespeare must have been studying about this time. (See also pp. 292, and 309, footnote.)

And in dealing with this philosophy of morals as we find it in "Measure for Measure," I must again refer to Bacon; for the doctrines of Shakespeare are based, like Bacon's, on the classics, the schools, on logic good or bad, even on verbal quibbles; but seldom on religious dogma; neither writer will permit his philosophy to encroach on the province of that "eternal blazon" which "is not for mortal ears." It is possible, however, that Shakespeare, who in "Twelfth Night" had smiled at the social extravagancies of the Puritans, may here, in "Measure for Measure," be delivering his protest against their extravagance in doctrine.

But the poet in Shakespeare comes first, and the philosopher only second; and the title of the play should rather be "Isabella." It is better to know the dramas of Shakespeare by their women than by their philosophy; and of these women Isabella is the *best*. You may like them for several virtues, these women; and by the word "best" I mean the most "moral"; this accords with the whole scheme of the play. Isabella—we conclude with the poet's own description—is a saint. I am not quoting "a thing ensky'd and sainted"; these words have reference to the cloister; but I allude to II. iii. 181-2. Again, let me illustrate, and by comparison; there is no inductive method in literature. Isabella we may compare with the Portia of "The Merchant of Venice," and the distinction is most striking; she combines all the daring of Portia with cold calmness and a hesitancy of peculiar charm. Portia would have importuned Angelo quite otherwise (II. ii.); Isabella is at war 'twixt will and will not; but for the urgency of Lucio she might have withdrawn from the contest; this is one of the finest things in the play. But as she proceeds, love dominates the scruple of morality, and she gains the respite of another interview.

But although the character of Isabella is magnificent and especially belies that current doctrine, "virginity, though valiant in the defence, yet is weak" ("All's Well," I. i. 126), there are still some traces of convention in the play: "Women are frail" (II. iv. 124); "Then was your sin of heavier kind?" (II. iii. 28); these, however, are slight, compared with the enormous advance in Shakespeare's art and ethics as illustrated by Isabella. But even Mariana is a noteworthy example of womanly virtue and constancy, well worthy to inspire two of the most characteristic of Tennyson's lyrical poems; nor are we reconciled to her devotion to Angelo, however repentant.

Indeed the character of Angelo involves a difficulty; this is not the only occasion on which we find Shakespeare blowing hot and cold with the same breath; the dramatist sets before us a man whose past is pure, but whose pride of doctrine comes before a fall; yet Angelo's past is by no means pure; "thou cruel Angelo," said Mariana; this was the Angelo of five years before, and he merely renews his crimes by the despicable attempt to throw mud (V. i. 220-3) on the woman, his combinate wife, whom he had deserted because she lost her fortune; Isabella "partly thinks A due sincerity governed his deeds"; so does Shakespeare; it suits his moral scheme; but I prefer the estimate of Mariana and the overwhelming evidence of all that early baseness.

The character of Claudio is distressing to the last degree; I find no stumbling-block, moral or artistic, in the Mariana episode or the Duke's slender disguise; all this is implied and involved in the ideal; but Claudio's abject and clamorous "Nay, hear me Isabel!" (III. i. 147) is the most dreadful mistake in all the drama of Shakespeare; one fire drives out another's burning; and this fire from hell pales if it does not quench the flame on the altar of Vesta. So Shakespeare sacrificed Emilia for Desdemona or Caesar for Brutus.

But there is more in it; among the antitheta in the play, none are so elaborate as the antitheta of life and death;<sup>1</sup> and for their full exposition this treason of Claudio was an essential. I have already called attention to Bacon and his philosophies and his methods; herein they find their best illustration; and as Bacon's Essays on Death are in praise not of death but of fortitude, so Shakespeare's in this play would teach us that life is best, but (V. i. 402-403).

That life is better life, past fearing death,  
Than that which lives to fear.

Of the Duke as a reflection of Shakespeare, and an earlier Prospero, I have spoken elsewhere; and this personal interest of the dramatist is the best explanation of the somewhat unusual proportion of the drama that is assigned to this character.

I do not often complain of the humorous element in these dramas, but the interruptions of Lucio in the closing scenes are like ribald laughter heard in some august cathedral.

Nor do I complain of their obscenity; this I take with the times; in those days it had not been excluded from art by progressive morality; moreover, Shakespeare's use of wit is always *artistic*, that is, progressive.

The rhyming couplets in III. ii. 275-296, are sometimes regarded as un-Shakespearean; but Shakespeare often falls off when he changes for rhyme; and such a change he is accustomed to make in a moralizing soliloquy; other rhymes here may be compared with the "Aside" in IV. ii. 111-117.

<sup>1</sup> See especially III. i. 1-150.

(31) OTHELLO, 1604

*Historical Particulars*

A Quarto edition of "Othello" was published in 1622, with the following title:

"THE Tragedy of Othello, The Moore of Venice. *As it hath beene diuerse times acted at the Globe, and at the Black Friers, by his Maiesties Seruants. Written by William Shakespeare.* London, Printed by N. O. for Thomas Walkley, and are to be sold at his shop, at the Eagle and Child, in Brittans Burffe. 1622."

In the next year, 1623, the play was included in the Folio; it was, however, again published in Quarto form in 1630, the title-page in most respects being that of the Quarto of 1622. Another Quarto, reprint of the second, was issued in 1655.

The First Quarto and the Folio texts were based on different MSS.; that used by the editors of the Folio may be regarded as most authentic. Aided by the Folio, the Second Quarto supplies a better version than the First Quarto, but the Folio text is to be preferred.

Prefixed to the First Quarto is an address "From the Stationer to the Reader," which is of great interest as containing a contemporary reference to Shakespeare:

*"To set forth a booke without an Epistle, were like to the old Englishe prouerbe, A blew coat without a badge, and the Author being dead, I thought it good to take that piece of worke upon mee. To commend it, I will not, for that which is good, I hope euery man will commend, without intreaty: and I am the boldcr, because the Author's name is sufficient to vent his worke. Thus leauing euery one to the liberty of iudge-ment: I haue ventured to print this Play, and leaue it to the generall censure. Yours,*

THOMAS WALKLEY.

Walkley may have published his "Othello" from some



MS. in his possession in order to anticipate the editors of the Folio; however, he omits about one hundred and sixty lines, some of which may have been later additions, and not included in his MS.

Malone asserts that "Othello" was acted in 1604, his knowledge was probably based on the following extract<sup>1</sup> taken, it may be, from "The Accompte of the Office of the Reueles of this whole yeres charge, in Anno 1604 untell the last of Octobar, 1605"; the extract reads: "1604 and 1605.—Edd. Tylney.—Hallamas—in the Banquetting hos. at Whitehall the Moor of Venis—perfd. by the K's players."

Although the MS. has been tampered with by a forger, the above is probably a genuine entry, and may be accepted as evidence of date. A forgery which assigned the play to the year 1602 was exposed by Ingleby in his "Complete View of the Shakespere Controversy."

Warburton favoured a much later date, because he supposed that the passage III. iv. 46, 47 ("Our new heraldry is hands, not hearts" etc.), referred to the order of baronets created in 1611, to whom "the bloody hand of Ulster" was given for their coat of arms in 1612. The reference may be a fact, but if so, the passage is a later interpolation. As to the date 1602, there can be no question that Shakespeare used Holland's translation of Pliny's "Natural History," 1601, whence he derived the Anthropophagi, the Pontick sea allusion, the Arabian trees, and similar decorative matter; and the evidence of metre and style warrant us in selecting 1604 as an approximate date. It may be added that the First Quarto MS. precedes 1605, while that of the Folio must be of later date, as it omits oaths and similar expressions, in deference to the Act passed in 1605 to control the Abuses of Players.

Historically, the events of the play may be referred to the year 1570, or perhaps earlier; but Shakespeare derived the story of "Othello" from the "Hecatommithi" of

<sup>1</sup> Found among Malone's papers.

Giraldi Cinthio, 1565. This is not the first occasion on which he has consulted Cinthio, and probably in the original Italian; and again, he takes the barest outlines, and from a story of little merit. As to the names of his *dramatis personae* "Disdemona" (*Δυσδαίμων*) was in Cinthio; Iago, which occurs in Holinshed, is another form of Iachimo, and the two characters are sometimes compared; but the origin of the name Othello is unknown. I may add the opinion that Shakespeare used some version of the story (possibly dramatized) that has not come down to us; this might have supplied him with the names of some of his *dramatis personae*, and would perhaps throw light on Cassio (cf. *cash*) as a tradesman, and on "Sagittary," "Marcus Luccicos," and the like.

The time of the Play is: First day, Act I., Venice. Interval. Voyage to Cyprus. Second day, II. Third day, III., IV., V. (these four Acts in Cyprus).

### *Critical Remarks*

From an actor's point of view the part of Othello is the very hardest that he can undertake; the passion is so intense and so long drawn out that the strain—physical as well as mental—is enormous; this the reader also will have no difficulty in realizing, and therefore we may assume at the outset that in the character of Othello Shakespeare has reached the summit of the histrionic art. But if the character is supreme, so is the play, and with a like supremacy; for in no other is the interest so absorbing and the pathos so overpowering.

But it has other qualities which make for greatness; it has a remarkable oneness of action because of its oneness of interest; for the villainy of Iago dominates the action, as is often proclaimed by his soliloquies at the close of a scene; and from first to last we fix our breathless attention on the villain's schemes—not of vengeance, but of something like absolute villainy.

Another quality of the play is one that we frequently find lacking in the dramatic work of Shakespeare, an almost perfect symmetry of form. By this I do not imply on Shakespeare's part a servile adherence to the effete unities; the unity of time, for instance, is violated, or it would be, as we shall see later, were the genius of Shakespeare less than it is; nor do I refer to its tragic construction which has peculiarities that will be noticed below; I mean rather an artistic oneness of treatment as observable in the meanest detail as in character or plot, from the mere refrain of a song to the last magnificent oration of Othello; there is nowhere, as in "King Lear," and even "Macbeth," the slightest loss of perspective, the least error in taste or judgement; or if I make one exception, I shall make it most reluctantly, and I must believe that Shakespeare did the same, when habit, convention, the groundlings or another hand than his own wrought the last words of Othello into a miserable couplet of conceit and rhyme—

I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee : no way but this ;  
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.<sup>1</sup>

Would the strain of passion or of pity have been too great without this doubtful relief?

As to the time of the action, which perplexes the critic more than spectator or reader, let me speak of a law beyond the law—the law of genius; as we shall notice in the character of Iago, Shakespeare provides himself at starting with too much of the material offered by his authority; and though he modifies or ultimately rejects this material, it often hampers his movements; for example, the time of the original story may not adapt itself to Shakespeare's development of that story. But he risks the incongruity, and rightly; the gain of this concession is so great that to deplore the supposed loss—for his genius avoids all glaring

<sup>1</sup> Imitated by Macaulay in his "Virginius"—"There is no way but this." Macaulay regards "Othello" as perhaps the greatest work in the world.

inconsistency—would be like stopping our ears against the unsymmetrical symmetry of the music of the nightingale, or throwing away a passion-flower because it was not made by compass and ruler. Also the peculiarities of tragic construction referred to above are justified as much by the laws of genius as by those of art. To represent these peculiarities in detail would be impossible here; I can only point to the prominence assumed by the figure of Iago who (and there is something like it in "King Lear"), from one point of view, is almost protagonist; and to the fact that the crisis occurs early (II. i.), and is developed by Roderigo rather than Iago, while the conflict is maintained right up to the catastrophe, and the counter action is the shortest possible.

Nevertheless, in our review of the characters, we begin with Othello, who has rightly given the play its title; but I must confine my remarks to two or three facts that are easily lost sight of. First, jealousy, the sacred egoism of love, may be a virtue; it was with Othello, it was not with Ford, in whom it appeared as a form of petty and irritable selfishness. Next, we must believe Shakespeare when he tells us that Othello was a man not easily jealous; he was wrought upon by one who played the villain, as being to him the leading part, if not the noblest, in the drama of life. Again, but for the fact that Othello was a Moor—a fact of which he was only too conscious—he would not have been duped so easily, if at all; but that was regarded as a "frail vow betwixt an erring barbarian and a super-subtle Venetian," and by no means too hard for the wit of Iago and all the tribe of hell;<sup>1</sup> prejudice against such an alliance is abundant in other pages of Shakespeare; compare "lose her to

<sup>1</sup> I. iii. 361-368. The black complexion of Othello bears out his simple character; he is no smooth-faced conventionally-crafty Venetian. For the close relation between Moor and "black," see Arden ed. of "The Tempest," pp. xxxiii and xxxiv. Caliban, that "thing of darkness" was Algerian, Negro, and Indian. See also p. 132; and cf. Cinthio's *negressa*.

an African" in "The Tempest"; such a love as Othello's therefore implied a trembling jealousy. Lastly, if Ford had killed his wife, it would have been in a vulgar fit of temper; and after the deed he would have thought no more about her, but a good deal about himself. Othello on the other hand has—or thinks he has—many motives; it is the cause—the cause that cannot be named to the chaste stars; then there are the demands of society; the tradition of virtue has been outraged; she must die, lest she betray more men: and—there is the "great revenge." But all these motives are vassals to the yet greater love; have we ever tried to realize the words, "I kiss'd thee ere I killed thee?" At this point we do not quote the desecrating couplet.

None the less the death of Desdemona is the saddest in all the tragedy of Shakespeare. Next to living for love we might choose to die for love, and this is the lot of Juliet, of Portia the wife of Brutus, of Ophelia, of Cordelia; on all such sacrifices love throws incense; but Desdemona does not die for love; she is merely murdered—scarcely that indeed; for her death is more like a mistake, an accident; it is almost unheroic, almost unredeemed; its evil is as nearly absolute as the villainy of Iago is nearly absolute. In no other drama of Shakespeare's are pain and wrong left in their brute reality; there is always some glimpse of ideal justice and restitution; even Banquo will live again in his posterity; the love of Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet and Ophelia, Lear and Cordelia, is made immortal by death; we shall follow it to Heaven's remotest star; but on the gravestones of Othello and Desdemona we read the brief inscription by Shakespeare, *Miserrimus, Miserrima*.

Finally, let us say that the defect in these two tragic characters is an enviable one—the lack of mere worldly wisdom; and once more the woman in the tragedy is the counterpart of the man, and in this fact is the first clue

to her position. Each is far more sinned against than sinning, and we leave them in their graves with less bitterness as we reflect that in a perfect world they would have been perfect.

Now, this is the impression we receive from the play—some of us, at least, or in some of our moods; and the question remains, "Is not another opinion possible?" For if Iago is like Mephistopheles, or Fate; if his villainy is "absolute"—and with it, as a consequence, the death of Desdemona and the poisoning of Othello's love—has not Shakespeare overreached himself; has he not made Iago inhuman, and lost the true perspective of tragedy?

It is possible that no answer to this question can be wholly satisfactory, but I think we shall get nearest to the truth by assuming that the villainy of Iago, though relative in fact, is absolute in idea; and this hypothesis I will now briefly examine.

Of the character of Iago I have said something on pp. 126-129, where I point out the inadequacy of his motive for revenge; that motive Shakespeare adopted—or rather, adapted—from Cinthio; he used it, thus modified, partly in deference to his original, partly to give himself a starting-point, which point—and such indeed was his general practice<sup>1</sup>—he lost sight of as soon as the start was made. Nor indeed are Iago's actions governed by any desire of vengeance; what he enjoys, if he enjoys anything, is the sense of power, the power of doing evil; possibly under other conditions he might have found equal enjoyment in the power of doing good. But he has chosen evil for his good—"I have looked upon the world for four times seven years; and since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury, I never found man that knew how to love himself" (I. iii. 312-315). This, as we learn from the context,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hamlet's madness, Henry V's wildness, Richard III's ambition (p. 128), and others. I may add that the villain's motive in Cinthio is hatred of Desdemona, and jealousy, *not of Othello*, but of the "Captain."

briefly means, "If I have judged the world aright, self-interest is the only rule of life; let your will dominate all things, even love, and with that, all so-called virtue; let it turn virtue into pitch; virtue—a fig!" Goodness, therefore, like love, is merely "a permission of the will" that the will may well put to scorn; but evil is a matter of self-interest, and must be pursued if for no other end than the sense of power in the doing of it: "Work on, my medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught" (IV. i. 45). Thus we see that even if we could find in the play—but we cannot—any ground for jealousy or vengeance in Iago, these motives are lost sight of as soon as found, in the larger motives that I have above indicated.

In these larger motives we seem to discover some principle of Iago's humanity; and further, I have spoken (p. 129) of his *grudge* against virtue; and perhaps the word "grudge" of itself implies in Iago not a godlike omniscience nor a fiendlike indifference, but rather a sense of uneasiness in his own devilry; or, as Tennyson so aptly puts it, "A little grain of conscience made him sour." Surely this is plausible; surely we have defended the artistic honour of Shakespeare, and may regard our inquiry as complete?

But if we closely examine the play, we shall discover difficulties as numerous as they are formidable; the above will serve well enough for *our* Iago; is it Shakespeare's? To begin with quotations; we have many degrees of villainy; I select three: (a) the negative—"What's he then that says I play the villain?" (b) the positive—"To plume up my will in double knavery;" (c) the absolute—"This *monstrous* birth . . . When devils will the blackest sins put on." Further, there are dozens of quotations that come under one or another of these three heads, and there are dozens that fill the intervening spaces.

Now, it is dangerous to play on the shore of relativity where it shelves to the ocean of the Absolute; this Shake-

spere may have done; and this we shall certainly do if we attempt any *exhaustive* analysis of the character of Iago. I prefer the risk of returning to the hypothesis—the compromise—which I suggested at the outset of this brief investigation, “though relative in fact, yet absolute in idea”; that is quite near enough to these dangerous ocean depths.

Still, I may add one or two hints for those who care to pursue the inquiry further; likely enough they will find themselves contending that Iago does evil not for *his* sake, but for *its* sake; and then they will find it as easy—perhaps easier—to contend that he does evil not for *its* sake, but for *his* sake; and they will conclude by reflecting that we cannot in actual fact eliminate self, *i.e.*, a selfish motive, even from goodness; yet that we can, and we do, eliminate it *in idea*. And here again is my compromise. Further, they will probably make use of the expression “motive-hunting” (p. 129); this again will involve them in difficulties, even if they intend by it that Iago was not quite sure why he acted as he did, though they themselves (as they suppose) are sure; for “motive-hunting malignity” is dangerously like “motiveless malignity”; and motiveless malignity is either insane or automatic. Moreover, the word *malignity* has now become a contradiction in terms.

But lastly; did Shakespeare aim at the compromise suggested in my hypothesis? Probably not; absolute evil seems to have been his intention—“naked villainy” as he calls it in “Richard III”—“this word ‘love’ . . . Be resident *in men like one another And not in me: I am myself alone*” (“3 Henry VI,” V. vi. 81-83). But whether Shakespeare’s dramatic instinct has made him unconsciously yet successfully modify this intention cannot, as I think, be determined.

A few words on the character of Emilia: when we change metre to rhythm, we vary the stress on our syllables; but



a stronger accent in one part of our line implies a weaker accent in another part; it may even happen that to produce our fullest music we allow the whole accentual stress of the line to fall on one syllable; this, as we saw in our review of "Julius Caesar," is Shakespeare's method in dealing with his characters; one is heightened if another is lowered; and it may turn out that the method gives us a sense of unfairness; I have some such feeling when I approach the character of Emilia; I refer especially to the conversation between Emilia and her mistress (IV. iii. 60-106). Emilia had summed up her views of the subject by a line—"The ills we do, their ills instruct us so"; which Desdemona rightly condemns—and with the line all the foregoing remarks of Emilia. It is well to gaze upon one entire and perfect chrysolite, but ill for the foil thereof, when the foil is another woman—the woman, moreover, who would right the wrong though she lost twenty lives—who did lose her life through her devotion, and whose last words were of faithful love—"O, lay me by my mistress' side."

On other characters a briefer note, as befits their importance; Roderigo is weakness within weakness, as Othello is weakness within strength and nobleness; and Cassio, with his Bianca intrigue, often takes up a position and fulfils a purpose not unlike that of Emilia.

### (32) KING LEAR, 1605

#### *Historical Particulars*

The following entry is found in the Stationers' Registers under date 26th November, 1607:

"John Busby Nathaniel Butter Entred for their Copie under,thhandes of Sir George Buck,knight, and Thwardens, A Booke called. Master William Shakespeare his 'historye of Kinge Lear' as yt was played before the kinge's maiestie at Whitehall vppon Saint Stephens night at Christmas

last, by his maiesties servantes, playinge vsually at the 'Globe' on the Banksyde."

Sir George Buck, who was Master of the Revels, would appear to have sanctioned the publication, but more probably it was the usual piratical venture.

In the next year two Quarto editions of the play were published, and, as we judge from internal evidence, in the following order; the first had for title-page: "M. William Shakespeare, HIS True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear and his three Daughters. With the unfortunate life of Edgar, sonne and heire to the Earle of Gloster, and his sullen and assumed humour of TOM of Bedlam: As it was played before the Kings Maiestie at Whitehall vpon S. Stephans night in Christmas Hollidayes. By his Maiesties seruants playing vsually at the Gloabe on the Bancke-side. LONDON, printed for Nathaniel Butter, and are to be sold at his shop in Paul's Church-yard at the signe of the Pide Bull neere St. Austins Gate, 1608."

The title-page of the second is as follows: "M. William Shake-speare, HIS True Chronicle History of the life and death of King Lear, and his three Daughters. With the vnfortunate life of EDGAR, Sonne and heire to the Earle of Glocester, and his sullen and assumed humour of TOM of Bedlam. As it was plaid before the Kings Maiesty at Whitehall, vppon St. Stephen's night, in Christmas Hollidaies. By his Maiesties seruants, playing vsually at the Globe on the Banck-side. Printed for Nathaniel Butter. . . . 1608."

Of the twelve extant copies of the First Quarto, no two are exactly alike; but the differences are due to corrections in the press. The Second Quarto, again with differences, is a reprint of the First.

The Folio version of 1623 was based on an independent MS., but printed through the medium of a First Quarto, of which copy it therefore retained some errors. A modern text must be based on the Quartos and the

Folio, for besides other differences, the former contain a number of lines not included in the latter, and *vice versa*; neither, therefore, can accurately reproduce the work of Shakespeare, and our best efforts after a genuine text can only approximately represent his manuscript; on such strange chances was the world's masterpiece to be cast.

As to the date of its composition, our knowledge is more certain than usual, the upward limit being fixed by the publication, in 1603, of Harsnett's "Declaration of Popish Impostures," to which Shakespeare was indebted for many particulars, as we shall see later; and the lower limit, "Saint Stephens Night" (the 26th of December), 1606, is fixed by the entry in the Stationers' Registers given above. But the precise time between these two dates cannot be fixed; Malone conjectured an early month of 1605, in which year was published "The Chronicle History of Lear," called up, so he believed, as a rival, because of the immediate popularity of Shakespeare's play; he also placed it after October, 1604, because, in accordance with the Royal proclamation of that date, the word *English* is changed to *British* in the old saying "Fye, foh, and fum, I smell the blood of a *British* man" (III. iv. 188). It is also inferred from certain passages in the play that Shakespeare had in mind the "late eclipses" (Act I., Sc. ii.) of September and October, 1605, which is extremely probable; and, further, that in the same scene we have an allusion to the Gunpowder Plot. This also I consider probable; the event was a notable one; the second allusion follows close on the first, and is emphasized by frequent repetition: "in palaces, treason"; "*machinations* [used by Shakespeare only here and in V. i. 46], *hollowness* [possibly in two senses; cf. with '*reverbs* no hollowness,' in I. i. 156], treachery and all ruinous disorders"; "knaves, thieves and *treachers*" (trecherers, Qq; again the only instance of the word); "these eclipses do portend these divisions"; "divisions in state; menaces and maledictions against

king and nobles" (omitted in the Folio). Altogether we shall be justified in giving the date as 1605, or early in 1606; especially as it was performed at the end of the latter year, and from the conditions of the performance was probably a new play.

The sources of "King Lear" are difficult to trace; possibly, as is so often the case, some are lost to us; no earlier version of the story has a tragic ending; in none does the Earl of Kent play his part, nor the Fool; and, more important, none—except a ballad of uncertain date—gives any account of Lear's madness. Shakespeare could have got nothing but a few hints from "The True Chronicle History of King Leir and his Three Daughters," which was printed in 1605, but belongs to a period some fifteen years earlier. Of this we may first give a brief account. It is probably the "Kinge Leare" of Henslowe's "Diary," performed 6th April, 1594; and it appears in the Stationers' Registers of 14th May, 1594, but does not seem to have been printed. On 8th May, 1605, it again (as we suppose) appears in the Stationers' Registers with an altered title, and in the course of the year is published as "The True Chronicle History of King Leir and his three Daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordella. As it hath been diuers and sundry times lately acted. London, printed by Simon Stafford for John Wright, and are to bee sold at his shop at Christ Church dore, next Newgate Market, 1605." The following passage from this play will be an example of the material it offered, and of Shakespeare's method of re-casting:

*Cordelia.* I cannot paint my duty forth in words;  
I hope my deeds shall make report for me:  
But looke, what love the child doth owe the father,  
The same to you I beare, my gracious lord.

This we may compare with I. i. 54-108.

But the prose version of the story in Holinshed's "Chronicles" was of more use to Shakespeare than the old

play; he may also have followed Spenser in the "Faerie Queene," II. x. 27-32, as we may judge from some resemblances,<sup>1</sup> and the spelling of the name Cordelia; and hints were possibly supplied to him by "The Mirror for Magistrates" of Higgins, and by Warner's "Albion's England."

It is not within the scope of my book to trace this famous legend of Lear and his three daughters through Layamon, Wace, and Geoffrey of Monmouth, to its Celtic origin; I must now turn to the story of Gloster and his two sons, which Shakespeare found in Sidney's "Arcadia"; this, in his peculiar and masterly manner, he combined with the Lear story,<sup>2</sup> evolving through complexity a vaster and more splendid symmetry.

Nowhere, indeed (though there is something like it in "Macbeth"), has Shakespeare so fully and finely wrought out his favourite device of antithesis and counterpart whether in language, rhythm, thought, character, or action; we concern ourselves with the latter, as illustrated by the main plot and the underplot in this play; like "Love's Labour's Lost," and Tennyson's "Princess," they are a counterpart in opposites; Cordelia and Edgar; a father unjust and a father exemplary; a sister wronged by sisters, a brother treated by a brother with kindness beyond measure; a daughter who devotes her life to the father who has wronged her, and would shield him from the sisters that gained by the wrong, and a son who seeks the life of the father who has favoured him at the expense of a brother. But these reflections belong more properly to the next division of our subject, and to this we now proceed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "When the oyle is spent, the light goes out" ("Faerie Queene," II. x. 30), should be compared with "So out went the candle, and we were left darkling" ("King Lear," I. iv. 237).

<sup>2</sup> Unless, as (probably) in the case of "The Merchant of Venice," he found them already combined.

<sup>3</sup> The duration of the action of "King Lear" is about one month. 1st day, I. i. and day, I. ii. Interval (about a fortnight). 3rd day, I. iii.-v. 4th day, II. i.-ii. 5th day, II. iii.-iv.; III. i.-vi. 6th day, III. vii.; IV. i. 7th

*Critical Remarks*

"Othello" is a tragedy of the individual, the home; "Hamlet" of the species, the human heart (see review of that play); we all are Hamlets, and we may have a touch of Othello; but "Macbeth" and "King Lear" are removed from our average experience; their scheme is grander and their world wider; they rise to higher regions of the ideal; and, of the two, "Macbeth" is the more terrible, but "King Lear" is the more wonderful.

In my "Handbook to Tennyson," I pointed to the three important aspects of a drama like "King Lear"; they are, romantic complexity within the classic uniformity; the poetic method of utterance through a *persona* of folly and madness; and a grandeur of scale which of itself constitutes an important element in the power, and even the beauty, of art. Of these three aspects, the two first may be shared with other plays, but in greatness of design and execution "King Lear" stands absolutely alone.

Still, though the storm of passion rages loudest in "King Lear," and the issues are more momentous, I consider the long agony of "Othello" to be the most tragic thing in all tragedy; it is also the more pathetic; for the passion of Lear is resentment, but that of Othello is love. However, we will let the two plays stand side by side, twin summits of Parnassus, but unapproachable, the one in its storm and grandeur, the other in its unutterable sublimity of pathos.

For all this, I must acknowledge the difficulty of choosing from the four great tragedies of Shakespeare; and there is little doubt that "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" are the most *popular*.

day, IV. ii. Interval (?). 8th day, IV. iii. 9th day, IV. iv.-vi. 10th day, IV. vii.; V. As usual, the duration of the action involves difficulties; and like "Hamlet" and "Macbeth," the play abounds with minor inconsistencies, some of which may be explained on the hypothesis that Shakespeare shortened his drama. Further, two passages may be regarded as spurious, viz., the last two lines of I. v., and (less certainly) the Fool's soliloquy at the end of III. ii.

I shall speak elsewhere of the antitheta of good and evil throughout the play of "King Lear," and of the balance struck between them by the poet (p. 309), but here I must refer to the subject, because some critics condemn the tragedy—or praise it, perhaps—for its unrelieved fatalism. Briefly, I take this—I cannot repeat it too often—to be the lesson of "King Lear"—

There's nothing we can call our own but love.

Some learn this lesson for themselves; to some it must be taught; and the teaching may be stern or bitter; it was to King Lear. But, the lesson once learnt, the whole man is changed; and though the very gates of death are opened through the learning, that makes no difference; death is then the consummation of life; *for love implies sacrifice throughout life unto death, and the ideal death of love in tragedy only makes the sacrifice apparent.* Or we may put it thus:—If Lear had lived, he would henceforth have lived for love; as it was, he died for love; ultimately there is no difference; death after this is a mere accident; it will come when it will come.

And the same is true of Cordelia, although she had learnt the lesson, and death to her was always "the consummation of life."

But it will be urged against me that we may interpret "King Lear" as we interpret life, *i.e.*, according to our own convictions; and that we seek the poet's interpretation and not our own. Therefore I will resume, and quote from the play as I proceed; and I believe that the results obtained will be the same as the foregoing. As will be explained in Chapter VII, Shakespeare tells us clearly that the one thing valid in this mystery of humanity is ethical progress from selfishness to charity—"For thee, oppressed King, am I cast down; . . . No, no, no, no, . . . wipe thine eyes . . . upon such sacrifices the gods themselves throw incense." The conversion of Lear was sudden, and from

without; his *Ulysses* is rebuked within the space of a few hours; but the change will be lifelong: "I'll kneel down, and ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live." This is the way of the ideal, of art, but the change once effected, the drama is really over; "the readiness is all." "Cordelia, stay a little"; she could not, nor could he; his new love would not let him; his heart burst smilingly. And there were others who, under love, could not stay—Gloster, the Fool, Kent—"my master calls me . . ."

Yet further; Shakespeare tells us that we are what we are, not by circumstance, but in ourselves.<sup>1</sup> Lear was changed from a bad man to a good; and thereafter, what mattered? in life "we'll live and pray and sing;" if it be a prison for life, why, then, "We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage;" if it be death, that will come when it will come, the readiness is all—we two in love will die; "he that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven." Nor is the truth affected by the question whether Lear died in the mistaken conviction that Cordelia still lived; it is quite possible (V. iii. 309-311) that the poet intended to deal with him at the last as with his counterpart, Gloster (V. iii. 197-200); and if so, we have merely a refinement upon the conventions of art. Romeo and Juliet died after the ordinary fashion of tragedy; it was reserved for Lear to taste in the same moment the joy of earth and the rapture of heaven.

There is no fatalism in the death of a righteous man, a man beloved. Yet Swinburne mourns the "Night everlasting" that falls on King Lear and his drama, and all that is therein; on the contrary, it is the dawn of everlasting day. But what does Shakespeare say of Cordelia?

<sup>1</sup> In his usual manner, Shakespeare gives us a full view of "the darker side of doubt" before he throws upon it the redeeming light of love; and those who would see him strike his balance between blind chance and all-seeing Providence, should contrast IV. i. 38-41 with the very definite recantation in IV. i. 69-74. They should also cf. I. ii. 112-127 with I. ii. 128-148; and they may refer to IV. ii. 78-80, V. iii. 170-171, etc., and to Ch. VIII.



Certainly, what Lear himself said, and what we ourselves must repeat:

Upon such sacrifices . . .  
The gods themselves throw incense.

But this quotation will be fully explained in Chapter VIII, where a few other notes are given; there also Shakespeare's point of view will be more clearly indicated in a survey of the tragedies as a whole. Here, however, I must mention what I think has never been recognized, namely, the vast ethical importance of such a character as Cordelia, who is certainly the noblest creation of Shakespeare. In a perfect world Cordelia would neither be possible nor wanted; but in our world she is both possible and wanted; wanted in our war of good and evil; wanted, because every instance of good is not only an end in itself, but also a means to an end—greater good—the good of which I spoke just now, the “stream of tendency” from selfishness to charity, through all the virtues that lie between. Take from us these examples, and the tradition of goodness is threatened, reversion sets in; put them before us, and we press on to the goal of our high calling. Our good actions may cost us something; they are sure to cost us something; so does life itself; the giving of bread may cause us hunger, the giving of love may cause us pain; and we may even have to give life itself; but the giving is all. Here again we come upon the ideal—progressive morality grown in the gardens of art. It is the *larger* sacrifice that the artist loves to paint, and rightly, though he does not always know why he loves it, nor why it should be loved; but on such sacrifices, both small and large, not men, but the gods, throw incense.

Next to this lesson of love, “King Lear” is remarkable for the breadth and the sternness of its ethical invective; nowhere else has Shakespeare so wisely and

so fearlessly dashed his heart against the desolations of the world; and no other poet of his day had the wit or the courage to do it.

(33) TIMON OF ATHENS, 1606

*Historical Particulars*

The "Life of Timon of Athens" was first printed, so far as we know, in the Folio volume of 1623. The text is corrupt, and it was not divided into Acts and Scenes. Another play on the subject, which is referred to 1600, was edited for the Shakespeare Society by Dyce, who owned the MS.; but it has no clear relation to Shakespeare's drama.

Timon is a patchwork of materials from many sources; part of it may be traced to Paynter's "Palace of Pleasure" (Vol. i, Nov. 28), 1566-1569, part to Plutarch's "Life of Mark Antony," where we find Apemantus and Alcibiades, the fig-tree story, the epitaph, and a mention of "Timon Misanthropos the Athenian." It is further probable that the author or authors had before them one of Lucian's dialogues, "Timon, or the Misanthrope," and possibly "Il Timone," a comedy by Boiardo, founded on the former. In Plutarch, Timon and Alcibiades are counterparts of Antony and Coriolanus; and in his treatment of Alcibiades Shakespeare now and then gives us a forecast of the Coriolanus whom he has probably already in his mind. The honest steward, Flavius, is of the poet's own invention; Apemantus may owe something to the stage traditions of Diogenes, as in Lyly's "Campaspe." But to Lucian's "Dialogue" Shakespeare was most considerably indebted; it gave him the outline of his plot, and much of his motive; and in the manner peculiar to his genius, he combined the suggestions in Plutarch with the more elaborate satire of Lucian, whose method, however, he modifies in his most characteristic way. It is possible, however, that Shakespeare consulted some

drama on "Timon" which already included the suggestions from Lucian, and supplied him with other material that cannot now be traced.

As to the date of the play, we have no certain knowledge; however, we seem to have Lear before us again, cursing all humankind in the wilderness of his life, but with no daughter to redeem him, and to give him at once the artistic sanction of Aristotle, and the yet diviner sanction on which Aristotle is founded (see Chapter VIII). "King Lear" was performed in 1606, and "Timon" may have been written in the same year.

In respect of style, moreover, the play comes nearest to "King Lear"; desperation and declamation are its dominant note—"Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!" (Lear); "And let confusion live! Plagues, incident to men, Your potent and infectious fevers heap" (Timon). Though its style seems to place it between "King Lear" and "Macbeth," possibly "Timon" was the last of the tragedies, and we might almost fancy that Shakespeare tired of his subject, and left it unfinished. He may have been drawn to it while studying Plutarch's Life of Mark Antony, but it had been in his mind as early as the "critic Timon" of "Love's Labour's Lost"; nor was it unknown in other writers; we have "Like hateman Timon in his cell he sits," in Gilpin's "Skiaetheia," 1598, and "I'll be as sociable as Timon of Athens," "Jack Drum's Entertainment," 1601.

The question of divided authorship now confronts us; Shakespeare, as I have said, seems to have left his work unfinished;<sup>1</sup> and possibly the George Wilkins who will be mentioned in connection with "Pericles" put his hand

<sup>1</sup> It is quite possible that the editors of the Folio, after removing (see Chapter VIII) "Troilus and Cressida" from its first position between "Romeo and Juliet" and "Julius Caesar," wanted a tragedy to fill up the gap, and therefore directed some playwright—perhaps Wilkins—to complete Shakespeare's unfinished "Timon"; which, however, does not quite fill the gap.

to this play also.<sup>1</sup> About this time he was writing his "Miseries of Enforced Marriage," on which was founded "A Yorkshire Tragedy," and this drama appeared with Shakespeare's name in 1608. The parts of "Timon" which are usually assigned to Wilkins or some other are as follows: I. i. 189-240, 258-273; II. i.; II. ii. 45-121; III. (except sc. vi. 98-115); IV. ii. 30-50, iii. 292-362, 399-414, 454-543; V. i. 1-59; ii.; iii.

Let us now examine one of these passages that are referred to some unknown writer, say Act I. Scene ii.; it presents a striking contrast to the scene preceding; as to the form, we are seldom sure whether it is prose or verse, and the verse has a tendency to run into couplets with rhyme; fragmentary lines abound; only here and there do we come upon a line with the true poetic ring—"Men shut their doors against a setting sun"; moreover, the vocabulary is often un-Shakespearean—"apperil," "dich," and the like; and for the thought, it has little enough of Shakespeare, unless it absolutely repeats Shakespeare; here is one example from many, "they were the most needless creatures living should we ne'er have use for them; and would most resemble sweet instruments hung up in their cases, that keep their sounds to themselves"; this is apparently *copied* from "Richard II," I. iii. 161-169.

The writer, however, is a capable dramatist, and develops the play strictly on Shakespeare's lines. Possibly he also had material to work upon of which we have no record.

It is thought that the two inconsistent epitaphs at the close of the play, both of which are given by Plutarch, prove that Shakespeare left even his work in the drama

<sup>1</sup> As one resemblance among many I might compare "Joy had the like conception in our eyes" (I. ii. 115) with "Passions of the mind that have their first conception by mis-dread" ("Pericles," I. ii. 12). The figure occurs also in "Troilus and Cressida."

unfinished, for he would ultimately have made choice between them; possibly, however, this is not the only occasion on which he has taken a little too much from Plutarch.

The time of the action is as follows: 1st day, I. 1., ii. 2nd day, II. i. ii., III. i.-iii. 3rd day, III. iv.-vi., IV. i. ii. Interval. 4th day, IV. iii. 5th day, V. i. ii. 6th day, V. iii. iv. Historically, the date of the banishment of Alcibiades was 414 B.C.

### *Critical Remarks*

The question of divided authorship which we answer in the affirmative is a most important one, because Shakespeare is thus exempt from the dramatic blunder of depicting a hero who is overcome, and overcome by himself; the attribute of such a character marks him as ultra-dramatic, for that attribute is "morbid." The hero in tragedy must suffer, but he must also be strong; even if he commits suicide, it must be in relation to some interest or duty beyond himself, or his body will be thrown into what the poet rightly calls "a selfish grave"; and a selfish withdrawal from the world is perhaps worse than suicide. All this is clearer in the case of Timon, because he neglects the last possibility of nobleness by disregarding the devotion of his steward.

But Apemantus, who is intended as a foil to Timon, is despicable where Timon is only weak; he is incapable even of the selfishness of isolation from evil; he is born a misanthrope, Timon has misanthropy thrust upon him. Timon may be weak and morbid, but he is at least sincere and pure; Apemantus is a sham, and wallows withal in the mire.

The play is a painful one, though it abounds in fine passages; it might have been the best story of disillusion in Shakespeare had the author of "King Lear" worked at it throughout.

## (34) MACBETH, 1606

*Historical Particulars*

The tragedy of "Macbeth" was first published, as far as we know, in the Folio of 1623. It seems to have been printed from some imperfect copy, and in part, perhaps, from dictation; and possibly the drama had been reduced for stage purposes. The text, therefore, presents many difficulties.

We read in the Diary of Dr. Simon Forman, physician and astrologer, that he saw the play of "Mackbeth" acted at the Globe on the 20th April, 1610; but the date of composition may be as early as the year 1605; it should be later than 1603, because of the allusion to James I. in IV. i. 120—"And some I see that two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry"; there is also allusion, in a passage which is apparently excrescent (IV. iii. 143 *sqq.*), to the "touching" for King's Evil. The Statute against witchcraft in 1604 gave a new interest to the popular superstition, of which Shakespeare may have taken advantage; and James himself, who had published his "Demonologie" in 1599, and was supposed to be a victim of sorcery, may have been in the poet's mind.

Among other testimony of date the following may be noticed; in Middleton's "The Puritan," 1607, we read: "We'll ha' the ghost i' th' white sheet sit at th' upper end o' th' table," which may refer to the ghost of Banquo; the allusion (II. iii. 9) to the "equivocator" points to the trial of Henry Garnet, 28th March, 1606, who professed the doctrine of equivocation; and the "farmer that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty" (II. iii. 5-6), may refer to the abundant harvest of 1606; but the scene in which these references occur might be a later interpolation. We may add that resemblances to "Macbeth" are found in "The Black Year," by Anthony Nixon, 1606,

and in Marston's "Sophonisba," 1606, but not in Marston's earlier works. Further, an interlude played before James at Oxford in 1605 may refer to Shakespeare's drama, or be one of its suggestions—most probably the latter.

Moreover, the "Historie of MacBeth" was included in the new edition of "Albion's England," 1606; also, the play may refer to the Gowry conspiracy (dramatized in 1604; cf. with the Cawdor conspiracy); and the "fatal bellman" of II. ii. 3, may be an allusion to Robert Dow's endowment of 1605, which provided that the bellman should deliver a pious admonition to condemned criminals the night before they suffered. The year 1606 may, therefore, be accepted as an approximate date for "Macbeth"; to this period, moreover (see Chapter VIII), it is referred by the evidence of style and metre.

For the sources of the play, we turn first to Holinshed's "Chronicles," in which Shakespeare found the story of Duncan and Macbeth, and combined it with an older story, the murder of King Duffe by Donwald. He may also have consulted a MS. by Stewart which versifies Bellenden's translation of Boece's "Historia," one of the authorities of Holinshed. Banquo and the sleep-walking of Lady Macbeth are additions of Shakespeare's own; but he may have had access to some play on the subject of Macbeth which is no longer extant; and this contingency of an earlier play now lost to us, has more to do with the work of Shakespeare than we generally imagine. On such a play the "Ballad of Mac-dobeth" may have been founded; it was entered in the Stationers' Registers, 27th August, 1596, together with a ballad on the "Taming of a Shrew." Again, the actor Kemp, in his "Nine Daies Wonder," 1600, writes: "I met a proper vpright youth, onely for a ttle stooping in the Shoulders, all heart to the heele, a penny Poet, whose first making was the miserable stolne story of Macdoel, or Macdobeth, or Macsomewhat, for I

am sure a Mac it was, though I never had the maw to see it."

Here Kemp refers apparently both to the ballad and to some play on the subject. I may add that while writing his drama, Shakespeare would certainly consult Reginald Scott's "Discoverie of Witchcraft," 1584, a book to which he was indebted on other occasions; also that the relation of "Macbeth" to Middleton's "Witch"—a play which has many similarities—is best explained by the assumption that Middleton was in debt to Shakespeare.<sup>1</sup>

The duration of the action is nine days, with intervals;<sup>2</sup> the historical events for the most part may be referred to the middle of the eleventh century.

### *Critical Remarks*

I suppose that all must be agreed as to the general features of "Macbeth"; its simplicity of tragic grandeur, the storm-like swiftness of its action, and the stern—the awful—presence of the Supernatural. We may therefore begin with a few remarks under each of these three heads; the first compels a reference to the finest work of Aeschylus, and less clearly, of Sophocles (but for the ethical distinctions see Chapter VIII); and though we must not expect to find exact parallels, we may cite the "Agamemnon" of the former poet in respect of the larger elements,

<sup>1</sup> The two songs mentioned in stage directions in "Macbeth" III. v. and IV. i., as "Come away, come away," and "Black spirits" are found in "The Witch," from which they were probably taken by the actors of "Macbeth." It may be added that among conjectured interpolations in "Macbeth" are the two passages that contain the foregoing stage-directions, viz., III. v. and IV. i. 39-43; they have more in keeping with Middleton's witches, and can be omitted without affecting the action. Another suspected passage is 125-132 in the same scene. These passages, it will be noticed, are in Iambic measure.

<sup>2</sup> 1st day, I. i.-iii. and day, I. iv.-vii. 3rd day, II. i.-iv. Interval (about two weeks). 4th day, III. i.-v. (III. vi. an impossible time.) 5th day, IV. i. 6th day, IV. ii. Interval (Ross's journey). 7th day, IV. iii.; V. i. Interval (Malcolm's return). 8th day, V. ii.-iii. 9th day, V. iv.-viii.



and for some minor points the "Ajax" of the latter. To these must be added as an influence of form rather than of spirit, the "heavy" Seneca already mentioned and reflected in "Hamlet." Next, the action is rapid, even to breathlessness; the play opens with the awful incantation of the ministers of doom, and almost before the weird echoes have died away, the wheel is come full circle. As regards the supernatural element, it is more present and also more impressive than in "Julius Caesar," possibly also than in "Hamlet"; certainly it is more comprehensive, for to the ghostly visitants that throughout all human times are the special messengers of those high powers which govern us below, Shakespeare adds in this play the dreadful Divinity,<sup>1</sup> who held the keys of earth and hell and heaven in an earlier world, and makes her queen over the witches of his own day.<sup>2</sup>

But beyond these primary considerations, the striking feature of the tragedy is one that as far as I know has not been recognized; it is the part played by Lady Macbeth. This character, as we have seen—unless we presuppose an earlier play; and of course the suggestion is in Holinshed—is of Shakespeare's own creation; and we may reasonably seek for his motive in the creation. To this I have adverted in the review of "Julius Caesar," where I show that it is a later development of his earlier fondness for antithetical effect—a development, I repeat; for the part played by such a character is the outcome of a tendency we trace back to the poet's earliest studies. This tendency was more rapidly developed when with Plutarch open before him he involved Portia in the fate of Brutus. But in "Julius Caesar," as again in "Hamlet" (in the persons of the King and Queen), Shakespeare merely

<sup>1</sup> The "triple Hecate" of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," though strictly this is not the *diva triformis* of classic mythologies. But possibly the presence of Hecate in "Macbeth" is due to some other playwright.

<sup>2</sup> Even these are idealized beyond their popular wont.

tried an experiment suggested by his authorities; in this tragedy he determines to create the character and develop its possibilities to the uttermost.

Admirable indeed are the results; here is no crude effect of counterpart; that is lost sight of in the grander and vaster development; here for the first time is the tragedy of the bipartite, the ideal human entity; even Shakespeare now recognizes that either sex alone is half itself. Therefore he has given to tragedy a yet higher truth and a deeper seriousness than was dreamed of by Aristotle; the tragedy, I repeat, of a complete human life, a tragedy double in scope, and two-fold in its effect and its interest. For example, to the devices of *ὑβρις*, irony, Nemesis, and the well-known rest of them in this kind of tragedy, there is added the new effect of *pathos*; who is there that has read the play once and does not remember that, "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand."

But the relation of Lady Macbeth to her husband is yet more interesting, and totally distinct from that of Portia to Brutus; in the review of "Julius Caesar," I wrote: "Portia is to Brutus as he to Patriotism"; but I could not write here: "Lady Macbeth is to her husband as he to Ambition," though this is the view of some critics. As a fact, and as I said, with Plutarch before him, Shakespeare gave us in "Julius Caesar" mostly the primeval, biblical, even the mediaeval relation between man and wife which we find in Milton: "He for God only, she for God in him." In "Macbeth" all this is changed; here the relation of husband to wife becomes one of equality; even more; the poet pushes his advantage yet further; "The woman tempted me, and I did eat"—"Leave all the rest to me" ("Macbeth," I. iv. 75); and thus he combines an old tradition with a modern recognition of marriage.

We had "*Romeo and Juliet*"; we ought to have "*Macbeth and Lady Macbeth*"; we shall have—when Shakespeare passes on to repeat the experiment in his next

play—"Antony and Cleopatra" ("Husband, I come; *Now to that name my courage prove my title.* V. ii. 290, 291). If it should be objected that Lady Macbeth disappears from the drama, I answer—Not at all; she is equally present throughout; she plays her part till the close; she does *all that may become a woman; Who dares do more is none.* Though not in man's clothes, she is one of the many women in Shakespeare who try to assume the character of a man; but the woman in due course reasserts itself, and therefore Lady Macbeth *faints* as Rosalind did in "As You Like It," and for exactly the same reason. In fact this fainting—this touch of nature—is one of the finest things in the play. Further (see also below) she and her husband appear together as protagonists at the close of the play to receive the poet's equal condemnation.

This man and woman as husband and wife, one in their own interest, and one in ours, this modern ideal of the complete organism, this novel bipartite protagonist of the play, this is *the* feature of "Macbeth," its wonder, its beauty, its terror, and its triumph. There is nothing like it in dramatic literature; there could have been nothing like it till the time of Shakespeare, but only his genius, as is true of so many other such opportunities, had the power to make it a fact.

And if some of the other dramatic issues, effects, and situations of the play are marred by the mutilated text, this at least is unimpaired, except in one instance, which I proceed to examine.

Among passages in "Macbeth" which are supposed to be the work of another dramatist, the last forty lines are included; in these we read

Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,  
Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands  
Took off her life.

Now, Shakespeare is fond of the word "butcher," espe-

cially as a figure for murderers and the like; he had called Richard III. "that devil's butcher." He is fond also of "fiend," which is often applied to women—"Howe'er thou art a fiend, A woman's shape doth shield thee" ("King Lear," IV. ii. 67); and "fiend-like" occurs in "Titus Andronicus." "Self and violent" is a hendiadys, quite in Shakespeare's manner; and we may compare "Infusing him with self and vain conceit," in "Richard II," III. ii. 166, and "My strange and self-abuse," in this play, III. iv. 142. "Took off her life," is equally characteristic; we have "The deep damnation of his taking off," in I. vii. 20, and "whose execution takes your enemy off" (III. i. 105). We also find "go off" in V. viii. 36; and in my edition of "The Tempest" I have referred to Shakespeare's habit of using a striking word or idiom more than once in the same play; and in "King Lear" we have "his speedy taking off."

As far as these three lines are concerned, we find enough in them of Shakespeare; I have no space to treat the context in the same way, and must only state generally that it yields similar results. Next, apart from verbal and other tests, the whole passage is in Shakespeare's manner; as I have stated elsewhere, he is often hasty, stern, and matter-of-fact at the close of his dramas, and this plain, summary, and impartial conclusion of the dramatic business is just Shakespeare's way. Yet some would question the propriety of calling Lady Macbeth "fiend-like," and of marring the silence and mystery of her death by telling us that she commits suicide. But those who have followed my analysis of her character will have anticipated both these finishing touches of Shakespeare's hand; she is one with Macbeth, though she still remains a woman; these two, therefore, appear together in the line—"This dead butcher and his fiend-like queen" (see also pp. 428, 429). Shakespeare has done with dramatic effect, and tells the blunt truth at the close. This also we discover in the line; it

summarizes the intention of the whole play; Macbeth's trade was death, Lady Macbeth's was otherwise; at the outset he is pitiful where she is pitiless, he swayed by conscience, she dominated by her purpose; he is softened by poetic imagination, she is hardened by intellect, and will; if he falters, she screws his courage to the sticking-place; if he holds back for honour, she points the way to murder; in fact, she takes the lead, he only follows; briefly and bluntly, but for her the murder would not have been committed. Of course the poet never forgets the essential differences of sex; the reckless impulse of the woman must be followed by reaction and exhaustion, the slow deliberations of the man must end in recklessness; and therefore, as the play proceeds, many of the foregoing contrasts are skilfully reversed. Still, I have said enough to explain the epithet "fiend-like."

As to Lady Macbeth's suicide, let us refer to Shakespeare's earlier experiment; what does he say of Portia? "She fell distract, And her attendants absent, swallowed fire." This double doom falls on Lady Macbeth; before the dagger may reach her heart, that heart must be "sorely charged" (V. i. 52).

Once more, Lady Macbeth and her husband are joint protagonists, and though she may not fall on the field of battle, the Nemesis of death shall overtake her also, even if it must place the dagger in her own hand.

As to other passages in the play which some would deny to Shakespeare, I may add generally that with the exception of those mentioned in the former division of this review, the results of my analysis tend to restore them to his authorship, especially when I have regard to the undoubtedly corrupt condition of the text.

Next in importance among the *dramatis personae* comes Banquo. At the beginning, certainly, he is a foil to Macbeth, though some critics regard him as Macbeth on a smaller scale. But I doubt whether Shakespeare has

fully developed this intention in his dealings with a character who, moreover, was the reputed ancestor of the reigning sovereign; and if the earlier stages of Macbeth's guilt are hard to determine (for, like Bertram's, his change of moral front is partly at least a dramatic expedient), it is still harder to discover in Banquo any actual criminality. But after Macbeth and his wife, even Banquo has scarcely enough of individual being to merit a fuller reference in this brief notice, and the remaining personages are mostly conventional or shadowy. I may add, however, that this preponderance of the leading character or characters is in keeping with other classical aspects of the tragedy.

But another feature of "Macbeth" will detain us. Some of Shakespeare's plays are remarkable for what is aptly known as "atmosphere"; in "Romeo and Juliet," the triumph of young love over both life and death is enacted beneath a roof of blue Italian weather; in the enchanted island of "The Tempest," "we breathe the air of love"; "King Lear," if I may again quote Shelley, is "vaulted with a congregated night of vapours"; but in "Macbeth" the gloom is made not only terrible by the crashing of thunder, but also hideous by fitful gleams that are crimsoned with blood; in no other play are tone and colour so emphasised by the poet.

I have already (Section 10), suggested a comparison between the characters of Richard III and Macbeth; so also the two plays should be compared, and in spite of differences it will be obvious that Shakespeare had the earlier tragedy in mind when he was writing the later; we may note, for example, the prevalence in each of dramatic irony.

"Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell"—thus Hamlet inquired of a supernatural visitant; and in this play we have a ghost as the messenger of Providence, and the "weird sisters," who are neither compelling Fates, nor symbols of Macbeth's conscience, but the idealized

agency of evil; and both these ministers of the supernatural bear out the poet's condemnation of "Vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself."

But on this subject more will be said in Chapter VIII; there also will be found some notes on the technique and the style of the tragedy. "Macbeth," indeed, is full of suggestions for the student, and I will give one or two examples of the many interesting points of investigation: When was the murder of Duncan plotted? How much did Lady Macbeth know, and when? Was Macbeth innocent at first? Did Lady Macbeth really faint? (Surely—see also p. 320—she faints at the news of Macbeth's murderous "blunder.") How does she pronounce the words "We fail"? (I. vii. 59; for one answer, see III. ii. 11, 12, and V. i. 75).

I may add that a study of Shakespeare's originals will throw light on some of these problems;<sup>1</sup> also I may call attention to the irony that underlies the "repose" in I. vi. 1-9, and the "relief" in II. iii. 1-20; but there is no irony in the relief afforded by the tender pathos of IV. ii, or the intense realism of IV. iii. 158-240. Finally, I may point to the exquisite art discovered in Shakespeare's use of prose in what is perhaps the very finest scene of the play, viz., V. i.

### (35) ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA, 1608

#### *Historical Particulars*

On the 20th May, 1608, an entry was made by Ed. Blount in the "Stationers' Registers" of "A Booke called Anthony and Cleopatra"; this was probably Shakespeare's tragedy, and the style of the play bears out the date.

The life of Antonius in North's translation of Plutarch's

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, the long scene, IV. iii., is best explained by a reference to Holinshed, and to Shakespeare's occasional practice of taking too much from an authority. The intrusive King's Evil episode (p. 315) which can hardly be justified on dramatic grounds, also finds a place in Holinshed. Possibly Shakespeare wished to thank James for gratifying an English superstition.

"Lives" (see review of "Julius Caesar"), is the groundwork of the drama, and Shakespeare follows his authority closely in the first two or three acts, and then, as if warming with his theme, he creates more than he borrows. But, some further information on this and other points will be found in Chapter VIII.; also in the next section.

I may add that in history, the time of the action would be about ten years, B.C. 40 to B.C. 30; on the stage twelve days are represented, with intervals. 1st day, I. i. iv. (interval); 2nd day, I. v.; II. i.-iii.; 3rd, II. iv. (interval); 4th day, II. v.-vii. [III. iii.]; 5th, III. i. ii. (Interval); 6th day, III. iv. v. (Interval); 7th day, III. vi. (Int.); 8th, III. vii.; 9th, III. viii.-x. (Int.); 10th, III. xi.-xiii.; IV. i.-iii.; 11th, IV. iv.-ix.; 12th, IV. x.-xv.; V. i. ii.

### *Critical Remarks*

The proper study of an artist is woman—so Shakespeare thought when he took up his poetic pen and wrote two great poems, each having a famous woman for its subject; and that other famous women would have quickened his imagination we know from allusions in his dramas. But the conditions of drama for a long time rendered the fuller treatment of his early theme difficult or impossible. At length the opportunity presented itself; and although his favourite Plutarch had written no life of Cleopatra, she entered so fully into the life of Antony that he could well make her the main motive of a drama.

Shakespeare rose to the full height of the occasion; being the greatest of all poets, and at the zenith of his powers, having moreover for his model the woman who added the majesty of Juno to the charm of Venus, he produced a masterpiece that I dare not describe in any other words than his own:

A piece of work  
So bravely done, so rich, that it did strive  
In workmanship and value.  
("Cymbeline," II. iv. 72-74.)



How early the serpent of old Nile had fascinated the poet we learn from a reference to Cleopatra in "As You Like It"; and how she never lost her charm we may gather from the context of the above passage from "Cymbeline":

Proud Cleopatra, when she met her Roman,  
And Cydnus swell'd above the banks, or for  
The press of boats or pride:

and how completely she possessed his imagination we may discover in many an exquisite passage of the play we are reviewing: "Would I had never seen her," exclaimed Antony; "O sir," replied Enobarbus, "you had then left unseen a wonderful piece of work." Not less than Helen's, perhaps, is the power of Cleopatra to fire the love of man or the imagination of the poet.<sup>1</sup>

Nor should we forget that the man, that huge spirit (IV. xv. 89), by whom "she sat as god by god," was the "valiant" Mark Antony of "Henry the Fifth," and the avenger of Julius Caesar; never before or since have such strength and beauty been mingled in a poem so magnificent; an oak tree is "clasped by a passion flower."

But this is not the Mark Antony of Plutarch; yet Cleopatra swayed all men to her mood, the lover or the poet, and even Plutarch had to reckon with her influence, while Shakespeare almost re-created the man who was to sit by her side through all the adoring ages on the throne of song.

The other personages in the play, although far slighter by comparison, are nobly wrought; "that dull cold-blooded Caesar" is of course a foil to this "mailed Bacchus," and Octavia "with her modest eyes and still conclusion" is here among this vision of fair women to remind us that sooner or later our sense must undazzle; but for once Shakespeare is jealous of his own moral, and delays it to

<sup>1</sup> And we shall not, I think, detract from this astonishing personality any of its charm, if we add to it something of the versatility of Falstaff.

the last; not Caesar's valour had overthrown Antony, for Antony's has triumphed on itself; not the imperious show of the full-fortuned Caesar shall be broochéd with the captured queen of beauty and delight; even Octavia must acquire no honour demuring (IV. xv. 29) upon her.

And Enobarbus, the mentor of his master, and moralist of the play, throws his heart against the flint and hardness of his discreet fault, then plunges a knife into his side, crying upon Antony! while Charmian and Iras, women of Cleopatra, brave as they are fair, take the last warmth of her lips, and smile as they enter the secret house of death. Such devotion to such nobility again suspends the moral; at least I seem to hear the poet's aside, or his epilogue: "Let him that is without sin among you proclaim it; for me it is silence and tears."

To dwell on defects—or seeming defects—in this superb poem would be a sin against good taste as well as a waste of time; it is not that we love Plutarch less, but that we love Cleopatra more; indeed Shakespeare has erred in being too conscientious, and here and there he drags history into his drama to the imminent danger—not, however to the destruction—of his higher romantic theme.

On the other hand the mere diction of the piece, its wonder of dialogue, its surprises and triumphs of imagery and expression, its music, its final splendour of poetry, are unmatched even in Shakespeare; and are of themselves a banquet of delight and beauty.

### (36) CORIOLANUS, 1609

#### *Historical Particulars*

As far as we can ascertain, "Coriolanus" was not printed before its appearance in the Folio of 1623, where it is placed first among the Tragedies. It certainly belongs to Shakespeare's tragic period; in style, rhythm and sentiment it has affinities not with "Julius Caesar," but with

"Timon", and more closely with "Antony and Cleopatra," which it probably followed at a short interval, and may therefore be dated 1609. Malone pointed out a passage in Jonson's "Silent Woman" (1609), "You have lurch'd your friends of the better half of the garland," which might possibly be a burlesque of Shakespeare's, "He lurch'd all swords of the garland" (II ii 105).

As in the other Roman Plays, Plutarch was the poet's chief authority, he may also have read the story of "Coriolanus" in Paynter's "Palace of Pleasure." I may add that the historical time of the play would be about four years, B.C. 488 (*circa*), on the stage eleven days are represented, with intervals between each 1st day, I i 2nd, I ii, 3rd, I iii x, 4th, II i, 5th, II i (end)—IV ii, 6th, IV iii, 7th, IV iv v, 8th, IV vi, 9th, IV vii, 10th, V i v, 11th, V vi.

#### *Critical Remarks*

In spite of metric and other resemblances, such a contrast as is presented by "Coriolanus" and its predecessor "Antony and Cleopatra" is surely without a parallel in dramatic literature. A brilliant poem—it may be the most brilliant of all poems—is followed by what in comparison is no better than a long and rather tedious prose dissertation on political and social problems. For this strange contrast many reasons may be assigned, I shall be quite content if I give only one of them. "The story, Proud Cleopatra" ("Cymbeline," II iv 69, 70).

Woman—and this we shall insist upon in the seventh chapter—is the noblest theme of man, though man may not be the noblest theme of woman. And here I will go out of my way to record the testimony of one from whom the very opposite might have been expected, and such testimony must therefore be absolutely convincing. "Greatness of mind, and nobleness their seat Build in her loveliest" (Milton, "Paradise Lost," viii, l. 557).

Woman as lover—such was the intense motive of the former play; yet the subject of woman as mother was not without its opportunities for the dramatist; I expect that the drama we are about to consider lost some of its poetry from an inevitable reaction.

Shakespeare, indeed, has contrived to present to us in an English form, and also to apply to his own age and race, all the important principles that underlay the political and social systems of ancient Greece and Rome; for this famous legend of Coriolanus illustrates no fewer than four of the virtues that are dear to a nation in its infancy, and of course it denounces their opposites; and these virtues are patriotism, filial obedience, personal bravery, and a stern sense of duty or obedience to law. To these four may be added the privilege rather than the virtue (though it is that also to some extent) of noble birth, its high tradition and the weighty responsibilities thereto belonging.

I need not quote passages to illustrate these virtues, or to show their dramatic importance; I may, however, add that the poet neglects no opportunity—such even at this period is his method of antitheta—to insist upon the falsehood of extremes, as where he sets before us so plainly the mental and moral deficiencies of the mere fighting man; wherein again he follows the lead of the early Greek legends, the legends, for instance, that contrast the passions and the foibles of Ajax, Achilles, Hector, with the fine feeling or the calmer wisdom of Agamemnon, Nestor, Ulysses.

But as another and a sixth topic introduced from the Roman, and through this—like most of these topics indeed—from the Greek history and legend,<sup>1</sup> I could speak of

<sup>1</sup> Among Greek suggestions or parallels are the flight of Themistocles to Admetus, and the Spartan mother of Pausanias; as for the Roman "virtus," we compare Achilles, or Aristomenes, Miltiades, and Epaminondas; some also of the (extant) names written by Plutarch in letters of gold for all time.

the great and envious gap between rich and poor, bridged over by no middle class; the gap between the privileged and the unprivileged classes; we can hardly say with truth that there were two "estates" of the realm, whether in the times of early Greece and Rome, or in the days of Shakespeare; could the "rabble, the swinish multitude," the "rank-scented many," be an "estate" of the realm? Or if we grant that they possessed an earlier standing in the English commonwealth, in France, at any rate, it was not till 1789 that the people came into a political existence.

Nor do I think that opinion a reliable one which finds in "Julius Caesar" the patriotic virtues, and in "Coriolanus" the domestic; more correctly, a due place has been allotted to either in both dramas; and those who would discover in Shakespeare's Roman plays the ideal relation between husband and wife must look for it in his "Julius Caesar"; Volumnia, moreover, makes a noble distinction between the loss of her son and the ruin of the fatherland (V. iii. 122-125).

Such, then, are some of the topics that Shakespeare has dwelt upon in what I have called his long and somewhat tedious prose treatise; and it may be questioned whether a critic should devote any considerable space to a drama of this kind; but as a fact, my method in these reviews has been to supplement or support, rather than to intrude or expatiate; the theme, the plan, the power, the wit, the laughter, the wonder of the two parts of "Henry IV" needed little comment, and I gave them little; and as to "Antony and Cleopatra," it was vital with beauty, and therefore admiration largely superseded criticism. Here the case is different; the passion-flower is replaced by a vegetable compound, and the poet, if not the dramatist, needs an interpreter, and it may be an apologist.

Even the literary artist who tells his own story has trouble enough with its plot; but the dramatist who prefers to construct his plots from the stories of others often

finds the task still more troublesome. This was Shakespeare's fate more than once, and he did not altogether escape it in "Antony and Cleopatra"; he does not escape it in "Coriolanus." That a man of the high breeding and lofty experience of Coriolanus—who had done more for his country than any score of men living—should suddenly, and in desire of a vulgar revenge, lead against his country her bitterest foes, is of course an outrage on the ordinary instincts of humanity. That Shakespeare felt this is evident from the many passages in which he tries to prepare us for such a violation of the moral law.<sup>1</sup> Again, that the brave leader of the Volsces should suddenly turn coward, hypocrite, and villain is an outrage on dramatic propriety; and once more the poet did what he could (IV. vii. 35-54) by way of apology. The same difficulties stood in his way when writing "King John"; but these he surmounted by making the nation his hero instead of the despicable sovereign. Something like it is the sorry part played by Laertes; a gentleman of perfect breeding suddenly stoops to the basest treachery; but Hamlet himself changes in character as the play proceeds.

Most of these defects or difficulties are traced to the poet's originals; but sometimes Shakespeare makes trouble for himself by taking too much from his authorities; even in "Antony and Cleopatra," when his chariot wheels were hottest, he nearly lost the poetic race by turning aside and following the fortunes of Ventidius.

This also remains to be said, or rather repeated, that when Shakespeare had Plutarch before him, he was less careful to answer the critic in these things; and although he may change the order of events or add to them or make omissions, yet, as in the other Roman Plays, he is in the main content to be guided by the Greek prose poet. But he does not cease to create; a chance remark

<sup>1</sup> See I. x. 4-6, or, especially, I. i. 232-236, "They have . . . only he," etc.

in Plutarch was enough to furnish him with a clue, a situation, and sometimes a character.

Even the errors in the play, such as the confusing of the ancestors and the descendants of Coriolanus, are partly due to this same ready trust in the artist whom he loved, and from whom he derived most of his material and much of his inspiration.

My account of the sources and subject-matter of the play may now close with a reference to the opinion that in "Julius Caesar" we have a conflict of principles, in "Antony and Cleopatra" a conflict of individuals, and in "Coriolanus" a conflict of classes. Such criticism, which comes mostly from Germany, is dangerous; let us answer it briefly and bluntly by saying that in "Julius Caesar" we have the tragedy of Brutus and Portia, in "Antony and Cleopatra" the tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra, and in "Coriolanus" the tragedy of Coriolanus and Volumnia.<sup>1</sup>

This is no idle repetition; the word *tragedy* is present first of all to Shakespeare when he sets about his drama "Coriolanus" (pp. 414, 415); and, as will be seen in the foregoing footnote, it is his practice to enrich and often to ennoble his tragedy by the sacrifice of a woman.

Of course, when Shakespeare has written his tragedy we may—indeed we must—draw the moral; that is our business, more than the artist's; and the moral is obvious enough; even in the twentieth century we must condescend

<sup>1</sup> "We must find An evident calamity," says Volumnia (V. iii. 111-112). Thus again we are reminded of the fact that the tragic figure of a woman who suffers with the man is present not only in these three Roman plays, but in most of the tragedies of Shakespeare. In "Timon of Athens" alone does the poet forget to involve a woman in the catastrophe: and therefore his Timon, according to Bacon, must be either a beast or a god. If we ask why in these tragedies it is the privilege of a woman to suffer (if not to die) with the man, I may state—beyond the answer already given (the dual tendency; pp. 262, 320)—that it arises partly from the poet's favourite device of antithesis; in this play, as we shall see presently, Volumnia is Coriolanus over again in woman's form, and illustrates his character by being at once a reflection and a contrast.

to be "goslings, and obey instinct"; to believe that "There's nothing we can call our own but love"; that to do otherwise, to cast aside the sacred bonds of humanity, nationality, citizenship, friendship, kinship, one must be, as I quote above from Bacon, "either a wild beast or a god"; or, to make a final quotation from this austere and thoughtful drama, we must expect the fate of Coriolanus if, like him, in our pride or our passion we dare to stand "As if a man were author of himself And knew no other kin."

One word on Shakespeare's attitude towards the masses, as we see it in this play; briefly, it was the attitude of his age, an age whose philosophy had not succeeded in reaching that comparative estimate which proves that the virtues of the poor are greater than the virtues of the rich,<sup>1</sup> an age whose poetry condemned "the vulgar," as "basest metal,"<sup>2</sup> and could not with all its foresight catch a glimpse of Wordsworth or Burns, or even of Gray; and it would be as idle to blame Shakespeare for not putting a modern sentiment into his poems, as it would be to praise him for keeping tobacco out of them.<sup>3</sup>

Passing on now to the characters of the play, we shall find that of Coriolanus no easy one to delineate; and chiefly on this account; his virtues so readily change into vices, or again, his vices often become him like virtues. That Shakespeare felt this is evident from the quotations I give later (pp. 414, 415); he has something to say both for and against the plea that we are not altogether accountable for our faults; that they may be inherited, and so forth. But

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Herbert Spencer, "Social Statics."

<sup>2</sup> "Julius Caesar," I. i. 66.

<sup>3</sup> But we must not forget that tolerance, humour, and absence of bigotry, put Shakespeare in advance of his times; if he looks down on the masses from a patrician height, it is with a smile, not with a sneer; he partly approves of their struggle, and he loves their manhood more than he laughs at their politics. His contempt is reserved for the Demagogues, the professional agitators, who make the people their dupes, their selfish livelihood, and their foolish renown.



we may regard as final his stern utterance in another Roman play: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves"; ("Julius Caesar," I. ii. 140, 141.)

Another difficulty in the character of Coriolanus is its complexity; the many different legendary virtues and vices that we noticed as gathered together in this play are further embodied in the one personality of its protagonist; but we might say briefly that the Aristotelian excess in his character is pride, the defect a want of self control; and at some points he is a contrast to Brutus.

Volumnia, as we have seen, is Coriolanus over again; but she is something more—possibly, also, something less; the son was at least thorough, honest; he could not stoop, he must speak out, for better, for worse;<sup>1</sup> but to genuine tact Volumnia adds an illogical versatility (if not an indifference to principle, which is by no means entirely feminine), that would have made the tragedy impossible;<sup>2</sup> and I think our sympathy is with the son who was sacrificed on the altar of filial affection rather than with the mother who demanded the sacrifice. For all this, "The most noble mother in the world" was the poet's supreme attraction; and where you find his best poetry, there you find the mother also.

But the wife plays a very subordinate part; it would be absurd to agree with Mr. Ruskin, and call Virgilia "perhaps the loveliest of Shakespeare's women"; though subtly sketched, she is quite in the background, before which the figure of Volumnia stands so strikingly prominent; poetic justice to Virgilia would have been poetic injustice to the legend which was nine tenths of the drama.

Portia is the ideal wife, Volumnia the ideal mother, and Cleopatra the ideal woman of Shakespeare's Roman world; we may now add that Valeria is its ideal "lady"

<sup>1</sup> III. i. 255-260, etc.

<sup>2</sup> III. ii. 58. 59 (now . . . words), 28, 29 (I have . . . vantage), 72-80 (I prithee . . . person).

(V. iii. 63); she is the occasion of the finest simile heightened by climax that can be found in all Shakespeare; and if I have spoken slightly of the poetical element of the play, I will at least quote the most brilliant of the gems of verse that sparkle out among the versified prose:

The moon of Rome, chaste as the icicle  
That's curdled by the frost from purest snow  
And hangs on Dian's temple.

As to this prose, two facts remain to be stated; first, Shakespeare is content to be inspired by Plutarch rather than by his subject; Plutarch versified and rather tamely versified is often the consequence. Next, the state of the text is such that we often miss the actual language of the poet; and thus not only is his meaning marred or lost, but also his music.

It may be added that Menenius recalls Enobarbus of our former Section, and like him is "as good as a Chorus."

### (37) PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE, 1607

#### *Historical Particulars*

The following entry appeared in the "Stationers' Registers," for the year 1608: "The booke of Perycles Prynce of Tyre" (May 20th). The next year a quarto volume was published, with the title: "The late, and much admired play, called Pericles,<sup>1</sup> Prince of Tyre. With the true Relation of the whole Historic, adventures, and fortunes of the said Prince: As also, The no lesse strange, and worthy accidents, in the Birth and Life of his Daughter Mariana. As it hath been diuers and sundry times acted by his Majesties Seruants, at the Globe on the Banck-side. By William Shakespeare. Imprinted at London for Henry Gosson, . . . &c. 1609." (*N.B.* Reading in text is *Marina*.)

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that the name "Pericles" (which takes the place of the unrhymical "Apollonius" of earlier versions), is a variant of "Pyrocles," the hero of Sidney's "Arcadia."

From minute differences in copies of this edition we gather that corrections were made in the press. Other editions, varying slightly, followed in 1611, 1619, 1630, 1635. Yet the play was not included<sup>1</sup> in either of the first two Folios, but appeared, as we have seen (page 57), with six other additional plays, in the Folio of 1664. This version seems based on the 1635 Quarto.

The play, which is Shakespeare's only in part, was probably written shortly before its entry in the "Stationers' Registers," and in the title-page of 1609 it is described as late, *i.e.* recent, and it is mentioned as a new play in "Pimlyco or Runne Redcap," of 1609. The style of the Shakespearean scenes places them near "Antony and Cleopatra," and, as will be explained in Section 38, they have undeniable affinities with the three Romantic plays which followed at short intervals.

The portions that may confidently be assigned to Shakespeare are Act III., Act IV., omitting Scenes ii. v. and vi., and Act V. These contain some of the poet's best work, certainly his best sea-sketches. The other parts are inferior, often strikingly inferior. George Wilkins, who is mentioned below, may have been responsible for the first two acts and the choruses, and may have been appointed general reviser; while Scenes ii. v. and vi. of the Fourth Act have been ascribed to a third hand, possibly that of William Rowley; but this is the merest conjecture. It is likely, however, that Shakespeare had before him a play of "Pericles," possibly by Wilkins, which he began to remodel, in the manner almost habitual to him, and that he left his work unfinished. A prose

<sup>1</sup> Why, is not easy to say; possibly if it had been printed in 1623, we should have had a better copy than the present. It may be that like "Timon of Athens," "Pericles" was left by Shakespeare unfinished; and perhaps the former play would not have been included in the folio, but for the reason suggested in footnote 1, page 312. "Pericles" therefore, we might conjecture, was omitted by the editors of the folio, because it was Shakespeare's, only in part.

version of the story of Pericles appeared in 1608, and, as we may suppose, shortly after the production of the drama; this, the work of George Wilkins, was entitled "The Painfull Adventures of Pericles, Prynce of Tyre," and is founded on Shakespeare's play. In 1603 Wilkins had produced his drama, "The Miseries of Enforced Marriage," which contains slight resemblances<sup>1</sup> to some parts of "Pericles." In 1607 he left the King's company to join the rival company of the Queen's; hence, perhaps, his prose version of Pericles.

Shakespeare's authority for the drama—or, as we had better put it—the authority of the contributors to the drama, was first the "Confessio Amantis" of John Gower, 1393, where the story is styled "Apollonius of Tyre." It is Gower who appears as speaker of the prologues in "Pericles," and his verse rendering of the story has been closely followed; but the authors also made use of a prose version in Laurence Twine's "Patterne of Painfull Adventures," 1576 (reprinted 1607), which was rendered from a French translation.

From contemporary allusion we gather that "Pericles" was popular on the stage, although Jonson in 1629 spoke of it as a "mouldy tale." This condemnation its dramatic shortcomings go far to justify, but the Marina portions are imperishable, and they are of great value to the student of Shakespeare.

We may add that the mixed authorship of this drama misled Dryden: "Shakespeare's own muse his Pericles first bore."

The story of Pericles comprises about fifteen years; fourteen days are represented on the stage, and most of the intervals are accounted for in the choruses.

<sup>1</sup> The resemblances are of style (inversions, couplets among prose, etc.) as well as matter. Other resemblances occur in "Law Tricks," by Wilkins and John Day; and Day, it may be added, sometimes worked with Rowley (p. 336).

*Critical Remarks*

Our chief interest in "Pericles" lies in the fact that it contains work by Shakespeare which is preparatory to the three romantic plays that follow. The nature of these plays is described in the next section. That "Pericles" is thus closely related to the other romances, and these to one another, is proved by a resemblance of language, style, sentiment, plot, and incident, and above all, by the kinship of the central figures in each play, Marina, Imogen (*i.e.* Innogen, p. 342, or better, Fidele), Perdita, and Miranda, whose very names, like their characters, are fashioned after one fair and pure pattern. It may be that Pericles was not completed by Shakespeare, owing partly to the fact that it anticipated the leading elements in all the other romances; their main theme, for instance, which is the losing and the finding of wife or child. But I will begin with resemblances of word, thought, and expression. From mere vocabulary I might select *belch*, the word occurs, with one exception, in the later plays, the belching whale of III. i. 141, is "the belching whale" of "Troilus," V. v. 23; the word occurs again in III. ii. 55, and in IV. vi. 179; its use is therefore almost a mannerism, and there are countless instances in Shakespeare of a word thus employed frequently—often in the same play or at the same period—on account of its novelty or revival. For "belch" we also refer to "The Tempest," "Cymbeline," and "Othello"; with the exception of "Richard III," these are the only plays that contain the word. Another word is *piece*, this also has a special use in the later plays, we have "Thou art a piece of virtue" in IV. vi. 118, and "Thy mother was a piece of virtue" in "The Tempest," I. ii. 56; and 66, "the piece of virtue" in "Antony and Cleopatra," III. ii. 28, also "a piece of beauty" in "A Winter's Tale," IV. iv. 32, and "thou fresh piece of excellent witchcraft" in "A Winter's Tale," IV.

iv. 433. Again we have "When Nature framed this piece" in IV. ii. 151; and "Nature's piece against fancy," in "Antony and Cleopatra," V. ii. 99; also, "O ruined piece of nature" in "King Lear," IV. vi. 137; next, we have "this piece" in IV. ii. 48 of our play, and "such a mighty piece as this is" in "Henry VIII," V. v. 27. Many other words remain which yield like results on examination, but for these I have no space; I must now select one or two examples of thought and expression: "a heart that even cracks for woe," "a palace for the crown'd truth to dwell in," "begin to part their fringes of bright gold," "Persever still in that clear way thou goest," ("a clear life ensuing" "The Tempest," III. iii. 82). "He will line your apron with gold" ("Cymbeline," II. iii. 72), "Pray you, walk softly" ("Pray you, tread softly," "The Tempest," IV. 194), "Untied I still my virgin knot will keep" ("If thou dost break her virgin knot," "The Tempest," IV. 15)—these and a host of others will be familiar to readers of the later plays, especially "The Tempest"; yet I have barely touched the descriptions of sea and shore, of ships and storm, that are reproduced in the latter play.

It will be understood that in a short commentary like the present, I am often compelled to give results, and to withhold, or barely to hint at, the means by which those results were obtained. This places me in an unsatisfactory position; evidence such as that of the foregoing paragraph and several others of these reviews, is convincing only in bulk; given in fragments it may even produce an impression opposite to that which is intended; yet I shall be content if the reader remembers that they are but fragments. With regard to the present play, it will have been noticed that one or two of my examples were taken from passages that are probably not by Shakespeare—at least in their present form. As a fact, next to the sea pieces, the sixth scene of the fourth act yields more of the

Shakespearean element than any other part of the play; the blank verse, moreover, is much of it undoubtedly his;<sup>1</sup> and it is possible that the transcriber had the poet's work in his mind if not before him; for example, in the context of "Thou art a piece of virtue" we have, "I doubt not but thy training hath been noble," which the author or adapter or reviser reproduced from III. iii. 16, "Beseeching you to give him princely training."

Leaving these details, we proceed to the larger elements; the speech of Cerimon (III. ii. 27-42), with its context, reads like an early study of Prospero, whose "virtue and cunning made a man almost a god"; here, by the way, is the "cunning" of Prospero, "The Tempest," III. ii. 49, *i.e.*, art, especially magic, but also acquired knowledge, and the power thereof.

Again I have space for one example only; and we proceed to notice the spectacular and supernatural element in all these later plays—this applies also to "Henry VIII,"—whether masque, pageant, dumb show, oracle, temple, vision, deity. Nor shall we look in vain in "Pericles" for the flowers that abound in the other dramas, flowers that no hand but Shakespeare's could have gathered or grouped:

I will rob Tellus of her weeds,  
To strew thy green with flowers; the yellows, blues,  
The purple violets and marigolds.

These comparisons may be indefinitely continued; but I may have proved already that in "Pericles" Shakespeare has struck into a new dramatic path, and that he follows it through all his remaining career as dramatist. More-

<sup>1</sup> For example, this is perfect Shakespeare—

Oh that the gods  
Would set me free from this unhallow'd place,  
Though they did change me to the meanest bird  
That flies i' the purer air.

(IV. vi. 106-109.)

over, there is some truth in the remark that "Pericles" bears the same relation to "Cymbeline," "The Winter's Tale," and "The Tempest," as "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" does to "As You Like It," "Much Ado About Nothing," and "Twelfth Night."

"Pericles," as we might expect from its divided authorship and contrivances of chorus and the like, is without coherence; the play, as a whole, scarcely calls for our further consideration.

(38) CYMBELINE, 1609

*Historical Particulars*

"Cymbeline" is one of the fifteen plays that were printed for the first time in the Folio of 1623, where it appears among the Tragedies, and is placed last in the volume.

The date of its composition is doubtful; but in Dr. Simon Forman's manuscript "Booke of Plaies and Notes thereof," we find that he saw a performance of the "Winter's Tale" at the Globe, May 15th, 1611; and there follows without date—"of Cimbalin, King of England"; but probably he refers to the same or the previous year.

There are lines in the play that recall "Antony and Cleopatra" and "Macbeth"; and in writing his "Winter's Tale" Shakespeare takes a passage from the novel of Boccaccio which he used in constructing the plot of "Cymbeline," and we may presume that the passage in question caught his eye on that occasion. Altogether we conclude that "Cymbeline" preceded the "Winter's Tale" by a short interval, and the evidence of style and metre supports such a date as 1609 or 1610. Besides, it has many points of similarity, moral, literary, and dramatic, with "The Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest," with which, including parts of "Pericles," it forms a group sometimes known as Romances (p. 338).



According to some critics the suggestion of these Romances comes from Beaumont and Fletcher, whose "Philaster" may have preceded "Cymbeline"; these two plays have something in common, but we are not sure which has the earlier date; and the germ of the Romances is of yet earlier growth, for we find it in "Pericles."

There is another theory, perhaps barely deserving of mention, which assigns portions of the play to an earlier date (about 1606), partly on the ground of style, partly because some of the story of "King Lear" and "Macbeth" and "Cymbeline" is derived from the same authority, Holinshed; and a second theory suggests that the play was revised at a later date by another hand than Shakespeare's; but the evidence that supports this theory is too slight to be brought forward here.

I have mentioned Holinshed as one of the sources of "Cymbeline"; in these Chronicles Shakespeare found an outline of the historical portions of his plot, some of his thoughts and expressions, and the names of many of his *dramatis personae*. We may add that Leonatus is found in Sidney's "Arcadia," which Shakespeare had before him when writing "King Lear"; also in Holland's "Pliny"; and Morgan he may have found in Holinshed or the old play of "Leir." Belarius may be due to the Bellario of "Philaster" mentioned above; but, as I think, it was suggested by the Bellario of Greene's "Pandosto" (see next section). A curious fact is connected with the name Imogen; in the 1600 Quarto of "Much Ado about Nothing," we read "Enter Leonato, governour of Messina, Innogen his wife, etc."; but this Innogen does not appear in the play; possibly the Leonatus of "Cymbeline" reminded Shakespeare of this Leonato and Innogen, and he may have adopted the latter as Imogen. Innogen, we may add, is the wife of Brute in Holinshed.

But Holinshed is not the only source of the plot; the fair and vigorous growth of Shakespearean drama is

nearly always due to a skilful engrafting, and the romantic element of "Cymbeline" is derived chiefly from the ninth novel of the second day of Boccaccio's "Decameron." This he may have consulted in the original, or through a French or even an English translation, such as was published in 1518.

Among the poet's minor obligations we may refer to the "Faerie Queene," II. v. 50, for Cymbeline's refusal to pay the Roman tribute, an action assigned by Holinshed to Cymbeline's successor Guiderius. Resemblances have also been noticed, between Shakespeare's play and "Westward for Smelts", but of this old story the date is uncertain.

As is true of most of the legends in Shakespeare, so the wagger story of this drama and of Boccaccio may be traced back through centuries of literature, and in one of its forms, a French Miracle Play of the close of the fourteenth century, particulars<sup>1</sup> are found which occur in Shakespeare and not in Boccaccio, these, however, Shakespeare may have obtained from some later version of the story unknown to us.

Other hints, especially for the incident of Bellarius, may have been taken from an old play of 1589, "The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune," where we find a princess Fidelia (*cf.* Fidele in "Cymbeline"), also the name Hermione, in this play, moreover, Jupiter appears, much as in "Cymbeline." Less probably, the German story of *Schneewittchen* prepared the way for the adventures of Imogen, the Seventh Book of Fairfax's "Godfrey of Boulogne," 1600, has also been mentioned as a possible source of inspiration under this head, but we may now close our list of authorities, which nevertheless leaves not a few of the incidents of the play unaccounted for.

More to our purpose is an examination of passages in

<sup>1</sup> Such as 'Je ne scay femme vivante Mais que j'ay fait a li parlasser,' etc., which appears in Shakespeare as 'a second conference' (I. iv. 141).

the drama whose authenticity is said to be doubtful; other notes than Shakespeare's, we are told, can be heard in the dirge of the brothers over the grave of Imogen (IV. ii.), and it has been pointed out that "Euriphile should be Fidele" (line 238), yet neither of these names occurs in the song. We may admit that the songs in Shakespeare's plays are sometimes interpolations; also that a short song or fragment of a song is not easily identified as the work of this or that author; and in the present instance there are doubtless some misprints: for example, "And renowned be thy grave" seems quite out of keeping with the boy—the bird—the lily that was to be laid therein.<sup>1</sup> Further, according to the context, the dirge of Euriphile was of like note *and words*; and the words are not appropriate to Euriphile, nor to Fidele, who had endured little of the heat of the sun, had done little of his worldly task, had taken little of "wages." On the other hand, as directed in the context, the brothers word the song one with the other; and much of it is so Shakespearean in diction, thought, and manner that it should certainly be by no other than the author of the play, though possibly composed for another occasion. But surely no reader of "Cymbeline" would wish either to doubt the authorship of the dirge, to lose his first impression of its exquisite fitness, or to have it replaced even by the stanzas of Collins.

We shall be more justified in disputing Shakespeare's responsibility for the words put into the mouths of the ghostly visitants to Posthumus in prison (V. iv.); Professor Dowden conjectures "that the dumb show was followed, as the play left Shakespeare's hands, by the descent of Jupiter in thunder and lightning; that the speech of Jupiter (except the four opening lines) and the entirely Shakespearean speeches of Sicilius which follow, are parts

<sup>1</sup> "Unremoved" is Staunton's emendation for "And renowned," which reminds us of "And curst be he that moves my bones." Staunton objects to the refrain of the song.

of his original play." He thinks that in order to prolong the spectacle some actor supplied the doggerel lines, 30 to 92, which include the first four of Jupiter's speech. I think this is extremely probable, and have no wish to credit Shakespeare even with the "crystal window," the "shining synod," nor the "marble mansion"; which nevertheless is reflected by Shakespeare in the context as "marble pavement," where he explains it as "radiant roof," and thus whispers of the Greek and Latin poets whence he stole the pretty spoil; (*cf.* also "palace crystalline"; also "marbled mansions," "Timon of Athens," IV. iii. 191; also "Othello," III. iii. 460); nor even with "from stiller seats we came," which was good Shakespeare to Tennyson when he wrote "She comes from another stiller world of the dead."

I may add that the time represented on the stage is twelve days, with intervals 1st day, I. i-iii. Interval. 2nd day, I. iv. Interval. 3rd day, I. v. vi.; II. i. ii. (part). 4th day, II. ii. (part), iii [III. i.]. Interval. 5th day, II. iv. v. Interval. [III. i.]. 6th day, III. ii. iii. Interval. 7th day, III. iv. Interval. 8th day, III. v. vi. vii. Interval. 9th day, IV. i. ii. Interval. 10th day, IV. iii. 11th day, IV. iv. 12th day, V. i-v.

### *Critical Remarks*

We now enter the final region of Shakespearean drama, where a landscape of new loveliness is brooded over by an atmosphere of new love, and above all is arched a cloudless and measureless heaven. Let us glance at the landscape first; gentle zephyrs blow in spring below the violet and the pale primrose; there are summer herblets, the azured harebell, the leaf of eglantine; and on the winter ground is furr'd moss when flowers are none. Now all this means that Shakespeare finds a new delight in nature; he has left behind the dust and din of town, and for him the ministry of nature begins; the fever is blown from his

cheek, he breathes a freer and fuller breath, his sense is steeped in fragrance, he hears the melody of birds, his eye rests lovingly on all this loveliness.

Next, the atmosphere of love; this was noticed in the former chapter, and will be referred to in the chapter on the Art of Shakespeare; here we may add that the story of Marina, or Hermione, or Imogen, or Perdita, or Miranda is a story of repentance and atonement, separation and reunion, difference and reconciliation, wrong and restitution, injury and forgiveness, all to be consummated by new or renewed love.

Thirdly, the very fact that the writer thought and wrote all this proves that for him also the end was infinite hope, and with that, joy and peace.

If now we take an artistic view of these plays, "Cymbeline," "The Winter's Tale," and "The Tempest," we may begin by saying that the texture of Shakespeare's dramas follows the texture of his blank verse; at the outset they are often stiff with their precision and antithesis; then comes the period of a more perfect adjustment of freedom to dramatic form; and then again the fetters are broken, and fancy disregards the stricter forms not only of language and rhythm, but also of drama.

This was inevitable, if only by the laws of re-action. But other causes could be mentioned, the requirements of the theatre and of popular taste, the new experiments of younger dramatists, and the cumulative force of the poet's own experience which now compels into one astonishing combination all the past elements of tragic passion and comic laughter, of city crime and sylvan innocence, of inharmonious deep-thoughted realism and lyrical light-hearted fantasy, of clown and courtier, ghostly spectre and elvish sprite, of incursions into the grisly reign of Pluto, and delightful frolics in fairyland. To these we may add a spectacular element, and a greater abundance of picturesque natural description; indeed these are out-of-door dramas

as compared with "Othello," for instance, where Nature is seldom present, and the scene is mostly within four walls.

But if a combination of elements adds to the charm of this new group, so also the dramatic construction will suffer; in "Cymbeline," for example, the plot is weak, incidents are unreal, anachronisms are abundant, the conduct of Posthumus is sometimes inexplicable, and one character at least is spoiled by the poet's determination to bring forth good from evil. I mean the character of Iachimo; even villainy should not be made ridiculous in perfect drama, but Iachimo's repentance and forgiveness is ridiculous. All these defects we grant, and having granted them, admit as freely the truth, beauty and charm of the play. These are secured chiefly by the character of Imogen, the most perfect woman in Shakespeare; a wife, as the perfect woman should be; young, as best befits the ideal of woman,—and all else that the ideal implies and reality adores—lovely, perfectly heroic, quick-witted, accomplished, refined, long-suffering, tender. And it is a curious and delightful fact that in all these plays we have not only the pure and perfect woman or maiden but also the pure and perfect youth, the maiden youth, innocent, artless, yet heroic; in this play Guiderius and Arviragus, in "The Winter's Tale," Florizel; in "The Tempest," Ferdinand. These creations of Shakespeare, with the women their counter parts, are the crowning glory of his romances; but more, they are the crowning glory of all the conceptions of art, and with that, of morality, and with these of all beauty and goodness and joy as far as humankind are concerned, for ever.

(39) THE WINTER'S TALE, 1610

*Historical Particulars*

No edition of "The Winter's Tale" appeared before the Folio of 1623, and our chief authority for its previous ex-

istence is Dr. Simon Forman (p. 315), who saw it performed at the Globe Theatre, May 15th, 1611; and it may have been among the plays acted at court in November of the same year. It seems to have been "allowed" by Sir George Buck, possibly some little time after 1610, when he was appointed licenser of plays, and almost certainly it is referred to by Ben Jonson in his "Bartholomew Fair" (see Section 40), where he speaks of "Tales" and "a nest of Antiques" (possibly the twelve "men of hair," IV. iv. 333). The style and versification place it by the side of "Cymbeline" and "The Tempest"; I give it a position between these plays, and assign it to the year 1610.

It is founded on a Romance by Robert Greene, "Pandosto," 1588, known later as "The History of Dorastus and Fawnia." Shakespeare follows his author pretty closely, even to giving a sea-coast to Bohemia—Egistus "sailed into Bohemia"—which, however, is capable of explanation. From Greene he derives his plot, the idea of Time as Chorus, and all the principal characters except Paulina and Autolycus; but he makes some changes from his original, especially by restoring Hermione to her husband, whereas in Greene's story Bellaria dies on hearing of the loss of her son.

Another deviation from the story of Greene is sometimes regarded as evidence that "A Winter's Tale" followed "The Tempest" in order of time. In "Pandosto," Fawnia, who corresponds to Perdita, is cast adrift in a rudderless boat; Miranda in "The Tempest" is so treated; and we might suppose that Shakespeare leaves Perdita exposed on the shore of Bohemia in order to avoid repeating an incident he had already used. But, as stated in my Arden edition of "The Tempest," I believe that the plot of that play was sketched before "A Winter's Tale" was written, and that it was subsequently combined with the incidents of the wreck. There-

fore it is that I place "The Tempest" after "A Winter's Tale."

In regard to the sources of the latter play, it may be added that Shakespeare includes an incident which he found in Boccaccio when engaged upon his "Cymbeline" (page 343); the villain in Boccaccio's story was to be bound to a stake, then smeared with honey, and afterwards "devoured of the flies and wasps and gadflies"; this appears in "A Winter's Tale" (IV. iv. 760 *sqq.*), where Autolycus threatens that the clown's son "shall be flayed alive, then anointed over with honey," etc.

Some of the names of the *dramatis personae*—Hermione for example (p. 343) have been mentioned already; Autolycus was probably taken from Golding's "Ovid."

I do not think it essential to analyze the time of the action in these dramas, for I remarked at the outset that the process involves difficulties which are almost of our own making, and are barely noticeable as we read the play or watch its development on the stage; but Shakespeare's so-called disregard of propriety or convention under this head may be exemplified from "A Winter's Tale," in which the action with the help of a chorus extends over sixteen years; and as if to show that while it was within the power of his genius to overthrow law (Chorus, "A Winter's Tale"), he was willing at times to obey the law, he includes the action of "The Tempest" within three hours. I may add that Lyly's "Endymion," to which Shakespeare was often indebted, extends the action to twenty years without the aid of a Chorus.

The following passage from "Pandosto," will give an idea of Shakespeare's treatment of his original. "It fortun'd a poor mercenary shepherd that dwelt in Sicilia, who got his living by other men's flocks, missed one of his sheep, and thinking it had strayed into the covert that was hard by, sought very diligently to find that which he could not see, fearing either that the wolves or



eagles had undone him (for he was so poor as a sheep was half his substance) wandered down towards the sea-cliffs to see if perchance the sheep was browsing on the sea-ivy, whereon they greatly do feed; but not finding her there, as he was ready to return to his flock he heard a child cry, but, knowing that there was no house near, he thought he had mistaken the sound, and that it was the bleating of his sheep. Wherefore, looking more narrowly, as he cast his eye towards the sea he spied a little boat, from whence, as he attentively listened, he might hear the cry to come. Standing a good while in amaze, at last he went to the shore, and, wading to the boat, as he looked in he saw the little babe lying all alone ready to die for hunger and cold, wrapped in a mantle of scarlet richly embroidered with gold, and having a chain about the neck."

We are now reminded of Shakespeare's use of Lodge's story (p. 242) when writing "As You Like It"; but we may notice a contrast as well as a resemblance; in "The Winter's Tale" the poet's mood is graver, and the pastoral element has a deeper seriousness; for it is interwoven more closely and more continuously with the tragic issues.

For the (Folio) title "The Winter's Tale," we may refer to "Richard II" (V. i.), where the tale is to be woeful, "And send the hearers weeping to their beds"; and in the play before us we are told that "A sad tale's best for winter." Cf. also "Henry VI" (B) V. v. from which passage we gather that the appropriate subject for such a time is fable and moral. The title "A Midsummer Night's Dream," had a close relation to the play; but in the story of Hermione and Perdita there is little that can be regarded as peculiar to the occasion of a winter night unless it is the strange history of Hermione and her stranger restoration to her husband, which "Were it but told you, should be hooted at Like an old tale."

It may be worth mentioning that the incident of clothes

stealing," which finds a place both in "A Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest," may have been suggested to Shakespeare by "The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune," 1589, which he may have consulted when engaged on "Cymbeline."

The time of the action of "A Winter's Tale" has already been referred to (p. 349); I may add that it covers sixteen years. On the stage eight days are represented as follows: 1st day, I. i. ii; 2nd day, II. i. (interval of 23 days); 3rd day, II. ii. iii. III. i; 4th day, III. ii. (interval); 5th day, III. iii. (interval, IV. i., of 16 years); 6th day, IV. ii. iii; 7th day, IV. iv. (interval); 8th day, V. i-iii.

#### *Critical Remarks*

Much that was said of "Cymbeline" will apply to "The Winter's Tale"; we have the same love of nature and detail of its description, the same open-air impressions, situations, incidents; the same delight in what is young, and pure, and lovely; the same beauty, truth, and charm; in fine, the same excellence, and, if any, the same defects.

To begin with the defects; in Pandosto, "there was word brought him that his young son Garinter was suddenly dead, which news, so soon as Bellaria heard, surcharged before with extreme joy, and now suppressed with heavy sorrow, her vital spirits were so stopped that she fell down presently dead." Here was a difficulty; the story in Greene was Dorastus and Fawnia, in Shakespeare it is Florizel and Perdita; what about Bellaria, that is, Hermione? Is she to die like Garinter—Mamillius—and leave a beautiful idyll to cover the rest of the poet's canvas? no, an idyll may not fill the canvas; there must be two pictures in one. In other words, Shakespeare will proceed as on so many other occasions; he will give his

<sup>1</sup> Autolycus is mostly a stealer of clothes: "The white sheet bleaching on the hedge"; "my traffic is sheets," etc.

drama due proportion by telling more than one story at once, though the method may involve improbability, divided interest, and other difficulties; the statue scene (V. iii.) is in some respects as absurd as the disillusion effected by assigning the statue to Julio Romano; and it is strange that the restored Hermione says no word to her husband. But her silence, as I believe, removes a difficulty; the wrong done to Hermione by Leontes was scarcely to be healed by time or repentance—" *You scarce can right me thoroughly then, to say You did mistake*" (II. i. 99); and Hermione preserved herself that she might see the issue of the oracle, not that she might be restored to her husband's love; and although in these plays forgiveness (cf. "The Tempest," V. i. 125-135) must overrule justice, the poet dares not allow Hermione to exculpate Leontes, as she must do by speaking. And in the former section I pointed out that Shakespeare's too great but pardonable anxiety to make all end happily must account for the unlikely and unpleasant conversion of Iachimo; and in this play, besides the silent forgiveness of Hermione, there is something improbable, or at least unpalatable in the conversion of Leontes.

This is the case for the prosecution, let us say; and let us add reverently, it is scarcely worth the stating. But it not only satisfies the critic's sense of justice to his readers, his determination so far as in him lies to set the truth before them; it also gives him the opportunity of stating the case of the defendant; to the best of our judgment these new effects of joy, and beauty, and love, could not have been so produced without some trifling discrepancies, and the question as to whether we should reject or even condemn these effects because of the discrepancies may be left with confidence to the opinion of all who realize the greatness of Shakespeare's work in its entirety.

This graver duty performed, let us wander more at our will through these scenes of the poet's fancy, not for-

getting all that we owe to him; but for these visions of the poet—of the artist—life is certainly not worth living; they are the index of intellectual, emotional and moral progress, because any one of the latter, if perfect, implies the other two: "God uses us to help each other so, Lending our minds out" (p. 165). Our debt to Shakespeare, therefore, is larger than we generally imagine, and in these last dramas the account is no light one; in "Cymbeline" we had the perfect woman; in "The Tempest" we shall find the perfect maiden—Miranda, *equal with wondering*,<sup>1</sup> placed by the side of the perfect youth (p. 175); and in this play, in addition to the less perfectly idealized Florizel and Perdita,<sup>2</sup> we have the boy Mamillius. I do not recollect in Shakespeare any finished sketch of the childhood of woman,<sup>3</sup> and rightly; it is beyond the province of the ideal, at least it was in Shakespeare's time; but precedent and convention had found a part in drama that could be played by a boy of tender years,<sup>3</sup> and Shakespeare, as in "Coriolanus" and "Macbeth," took full advantage of the fact. But the ideal of boyhood, of childhood, like so many other ideals, was reserved for these Romances, and in "The Winter's Tale" we have this picture:

*Her.* Come on, sit down :— come on, and do your best  
To fright me with your sprites; you're powerful at it.

*Mam.* There was a man,—

*Her.* Nay, come, sit down; then on.

*Mam.* Dwelt by a churchyard;—I will tell it softly;

*You crickets shall not hear it.*

*Her.* Come on, then,

And give 't me in mine ear.

There is another character who deserves mention, even in this brief notice: Paulina—as we expect in these latest

<sup>1</sup> "A Winter's Tale," IV. i. 25, where Shakespeare has Miranda in intention. For Perdita and Florizel see p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> The nearest is that of Juliet as an infant; but the nurse could think of nothing but the woman who was to be.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur in "King John" and the young princes in "Richard III," and others, are somewhat older.

plays—<sup>1</sup> a striking advance on Emilia (p. 302), she adds refinement to daring and fidelity. She represents that commonest example of the real, and rarest creation of the ideal—a woman whose attractiveness must be sought in her moral rather than her mental and physical qualities. Dramatically, moreover, she helps to bridge the long interval of sixteen years, and by her assiduous “counsels” (V. 1. 52) to Leontes she does not a little to prepare us for the final reconciliation, and to lessen its repugnancy.

Yet another original character is Autolycus, whose humours are subtler but less amiable than those of his successor Trinculo, further, in his control of the action he almost reminds us of Ieste, and like so many of the clowns in Shakespeare he serves as a valuable connecting link between romance and reality.

#### (40) THE TEMPEST, 1611

##### *Historical Particulars*

An early month in the year suggested at the head of this section will be the date chosen by all who examine carefully the narratives of the wreck of Sir G. Somers on the shores of the Bermudas in 1609.

These narratives were three in number, and they were all produced in 1610.<sup>1</sup> One is Strachey's “Letter” or “Reportory,” dated July 15th. It was addressed from James Town to some “excellent lady” in England, and appears to have been entrusted to Sir Thomas Gates, who sailed for England the same 15th of July.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The date 1612 is a strange fiction that seems to have originated with Douce and Malone and to have been unthinkingly adopted by their successors. See the author's ‘The Tempest’ Arden edition, pp. 149, 161. No doubt this fiction of 1612 is responsible for the statement in Grove's ‘Dictionary of Music’ and in ‘The Dictionary of National Biography,’ and repeated by other authorities, that Robert Johnson composed the music for Shakespeare's ‘Tempest’ in 1612.

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards printed in Purchas, Part IV. Lib. ix, chap. vi, pp. 323, 1756.

The second is a pamphlet by S. Jourdan, published in October: "A Discovery of the Barmudas, otherwise called the Ile of Divels: by Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Sommers, and Captayne Newport, with diueis others."

The third is "A True Declaration of the Estate of the Colonie in Virginia, with a confutation of such scandalous reports as have tended to the disgrace of so worthy an enterprise. Published by advise and direction of the Councell of Virginia."

This publication followed Jourdan's at a short interval in the autumn of 1610. To these may be added the ballad "Newes from Virginia," by R. Rich, 1610, which, however, lent Shakespeare little more than the spelling "Bermooth-awes," which he reproduced as "Bermoothes."

It can hardly be doubted that Shakespeare had the above three narratives before him when he wrote—or at least, when he completed—his "Tempest," and that he produced the play while the records still retained their freshness, and the nation its enthusiasm.

For the events they describe aroused throughout England an interest that could not fail to reach the poet himself, and they justified such an immediate literary and dramatic expression as he alone knew how to create. For these events, and other particulars, I must refer the reader to my edition of "The Tempest," in the "Arden" Shakespeare (see p. 449).

An allusion to "The Tempest" is undoubtedly made in the following passage from the Induction to Ben Jonson's "Bartholomew Fair:" "If there be never a seivant-monster i' the Fayie, who can helpe it, he sayes; nor a nest of Antiques? He is loth to make Nature afraid in his Playes, like those that beget Fales, Tempests, and such like drolleries."

"Bartholomew Fair" was probably written between 1612 and 1614, and thus the date of 1611 is further supported. "The Tempest" also appears with "The Winter's Tale."

Tale," and some other plays by Shakespeare that were performed May 20th, 1613, before the Elector Palatine and the Princess Elizabeth. (See also next Section.) Finally, an upward limit is supplied by the fact that in II. i. Shakespeare has introduced almost verbally a passage from Florio's translation of Montaigne, which was not printed until 1603.

To these leading items of chronological evidence it is usual to add that the celebrated speech of Prospero in Act IV. (lines 151-157), bears a resemblance to the following passage in the Earl of Sterling's "Darius," a tragedy which was published in 1603:

Let greatness of her glascie scepters vaunt ;  
     Not scepters, no, but reeds, soone brus'd, soone broken  
 And let this worldlie pomp our wits inchant,  
     All fades, and scarcelie leaues behind a token.  
 Those golden pallaces, those gorgeous halles,  
     With fourniture superfluously faire :  
 Those statelie courts, those sky-encountering walles  
     Evanish all like vapours in the aire.

But the chronological evidence derived from the style of the play is not less interesting, though, perhaps, less reliable, than that supplied by the narratives of 1610. In addition to what will be explained in the Appendix which deals generally with the subject, we may here notice that apart from the lyrics and the masque, there is but one rhyming couplet in the play, and that the verse tests give about 35 per cent. of double endings, 41 per cent. of run on lines, and 84 per cent. of speech endings not co-incidental with line endings. Moreover, the number of compound words—and this is true of the masque also—is unusually large. Further, as may be observed in others of Shakespeare's later plays, the broken structure of both the language and the verse indicates that advanced period of authorship (marked in Milton by "Samson Agonistes") which seems to imply in the writer some impatience of the restraints of form that had for so many years exercised a wholesome if rigid control over his impetuous utterance.

Lastly, as will be seen in Chapter VIII, the subject and the general tone of the play point also to the latest period in Shakespeare's dramatic career.

As to the sources of "The Tempest," the play may be said to have a twofold origin; for although the wreck of Sir George Somers and colonial enterprise generally gave the poet an impulse and supplied him with much of his material,<sup>1</sup> yet (and this is so often true of Shakespeare's dramas) the main plot may be referred with some assurance to a previous play, or at least to a novel, probably Italian in origin. And it happens that Warton in his "History of English Poetry" tells us that the poet Collins had read an Italian story which, as he was convinced, gave Shakespeare an outline for his "Tempest"; for the principal character of the romance, answering to Shakespeare's Prospero, was a chemical necromancer, who had bound a spirit like Ariel to obey his call and perform his services.

An ascertainable and yet closer resemblance exists between Shakespeare's play and "Die Schöne Sidea" (The fair Sidea); this is a drama by one Jacob Ayrer, a Nurnburg notary who died in 1605. In this German play there is also a deposed ruler who has been expelled with his daughter, Die Schöne Sidea, and who practises in his banishment the magic art. He, too, gets into his power the son of his rival, and, as Prospero did with Ferdinand, exerts a charm on the young man's sword so that he cannot pull it from its sheath. And later in the play the captive prince is made bearer of logs for the magician's daughter, who falls in love with him; and ultimately the marriage of the lovers leads to the reconciliation of their parents. We know that some English comedians were at

<sup>1</sup> They furnished him with his underplot, or much of it, with his island, his atmosphere of magic, his Caliban, and the title of his play; possibly also with that "nonpareil" Miranda. See records of Captain John Smith.



Nürnberg in 1604, and very probably they acted and brought with them to England "Die Schöne Sidea"; but it is also possible that both Shakespeare and Ayre<sup>1</sup> borrowed from some common source, especially as the German play differs widely from "The Tempest" in many important particulars. Lastly we may notice that the history of Italy furnishes not a few of the incidents that go to build up the plot of "The Tempest"; e.g., we read of a Prospero Adorno, lieutenant of the Duke of Milan, who was deposed for treasonable conduct; also of an Alonzo, King of Naples, who was succeeded by his son Ferdinand; but these and some other incidents of Italian history are interesting rather as they bear on the lost novel or drama on which "The Tempest" was almost certainly founded.

It may be added that the time of the action—a few hours—is often indicated in the play.

#### *Critical Remarks*

However ineffective it may appear on the stage,<sup>1</sup> "The Tempest," has many points of interest. It stood first in the Folio of 1623; it is probably the last play that Shakespeare wrote; with one exception it is the shortest; more than all others it conforms to the classic unities; alone it contains a masque. Though full of the topics of its own time, and reflecting like a mirror its age of adventure and daring, no less than three of its leading characters are supernatural, or have supernatural powers, while a fourth, Miranda, is entirely original—a woman who has never seen one of her own sex. Its atmosphere is one of enchantment, and in this, as in many other respects, it resembles "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Lastly, "The Tempest" is invested with a kind of sacredness; we seem to hear the poet himself speaking to us, and his words are like words of farewell.

<sup>1</sup> Where, like "A Midsummer Night's Dream," it loses charm (p. 163).

Indeed, the play is of such general importance, that we must review it under three heads—as a work of art, as a criticism of life, and as an autobiography.

(a) "*The Tempest*" as a *Work of Art*.—Next to the distinguishing features of the play, that have been noticed already, we may place the masque, which is in exquisite keeping with the supernatural tone and colour; the magician will bestow on this young couple some vanity of his art; and to us he will display his own power and the airy purpose of his spirits by placing before us a majestic vision of the unseen world. In "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" we have the opposite of this, for the drama enacted to grace the nuptial pair is robbed of whatever ideal colour might have adorned its mundane reality.

The next feature of the play to be noticed is an unusual symmetry of dramatic form, especially in regard to the time of the action, which is included within three or four hours; in his "*Winter's Tale*," on the other hand, the poet had displayed his most daring contempt of the unities of both place and time. Notable also is the adjustment of the underplot to the main plot, for the drunken roguery of Stephano and his associates is an excellent parody of the villainies of Sebastian and Antonio.

Turning now to the characters, we may well believe that Prospero stands for Shakespeare, the mighty magician who wove his airy charms, woke sleepers from their graves, and set before us many a majestic vision; whose life was dedicated to the liberal arts, these being all his study; and who would spend his latter days in retirement at his Milan, where every third thought should be his grave. And no more perfect character could we find for a concluding play than Miranda, in whom love is refined even beyond the most delicate of conceptions social or literary (p. 175). And now that we have followed with Shakespeare the ascent of love to its culmination, we can

look back and discover the meaning of the wonderful series of women who represent every phase of the mighty and holy passion.

But not only Prospero and Miranda open for us the gates of another world, for Ariel has been called from his mysterious confines to enact the poet's fancies, and Caliban, the "demi-devil," gives us glimpses of confines less lovely though not less mysterious. These two are finely contrasted symbols of elemental Nature; but Caliban, as I have pointed out elsewhere, is also a grotesque embodiment of three main ideas in the poet's mind; he is at once—or rather by turns—the monster, the slave, and the aboriginal Indian, and reflects in one personality the supernatural, the social, and the political topics of the day.

(b) "*The Tempest*" as a Criticism of Life.—A critic of life therefore is Caliban, and a stern one, who shows vice its own image beyond every other character in Shakespeare, the vices of thieving, lying, drink, lust, of false education, of enervating refinement, of a civilization that exchanges manhood and work for effeminacy and idleness; vices of growing states that drive the native from his soil, or force him to labour thereupon, and fill him with disease and death.

But there is also in this drama the kindlier criticism of life, the good-humoured laugh or the genial smile where-with the poet reminds us that these political and social problems are solved by effort, conduct, and love, and not by theories that "excel the golden age" (II. i. 167-8); that knowledge and power are a means, not an end; that even art is but a type of diviner perfection, and must respect those human responsibilities and duties that help it to make life worth living; that love is man's, but vengeance is the Lord's (V. 27-30); that hate and greed, violence and wrong, can be atoned by "nothing but heart sorrow And a clear life ensuing" (III. iii. 82); that true service is the truest freedom—indeed the whole play is a profound but

delightful sermon on the poet's own text, "Every man shift for all the rest, and let no man take care for himself" (V. 257 and 20-30).

In fact, it has not, I think, been recognized how admirably in this play Shakespeare draws together the various ideal threads that run through his previous dramas. Besides the foregoing ideals of love in man and woman (also pp. 175, 247), and of politics, social systems, morality, conduct (II. i. 150, *sqq.*, and p. 10), we have the ideal of marriage, as in the betrothal and the Masque; of beauty:—"I might call him a thing divine . . . Most sure, the goddess . . ."; of education (p. 207); of character, as in Prospero; of the final education of good from evil (V. 205-213); of virtue, as in passages innumerable; of poetic justice everywhere; of the supernatural, as in the ministrations of Ariel; of Providence (I. ii. 159, and III. iii. 53-58); and lastly, as the ideal of mortality is immortality, we refer to V. 310, 311.

(c) "*The Tempest*" as an *Autobiography*.—We have already decided to regard a poet as a man with a soul, not a machine with a handle; we have learnt that a long series of poetic dramas advancing in subtlety, complexity, refinement, and the rest, will become an index of the poet's own mental growth—moral, intellectual, emotional; that, ultimately, style is a revelation of soul. Therefore we make no apology for a brief note on "*The Tempest*" as an autobiography.

It is quite likely that "*The Tempest*" was the last of Shakespeare's plays; and it may be asked, "Why did he cease writing in 1611, when his powers were but mature? How often has death alone silenced the voice of some great singer who "did but sing because he must"; was it otherwise with Shakespeare? was it possible that in the prime of life he should deliberately renounce the ecstasy and the glory of creating? To this very natural question the answer will probably be as follows: Shakespeare is now

approaching his fiftieth year, and his life has been devoted to literature not in the way of idle seclusion, relaxation, or contemplation, but rather of strenuous effort and ceaseless, often hurried, production; he has no heart to renew the poetic exercises of earlier years, and his dramatic labours have earned for him a competence; therefore he will "retire him to his Milan."

But we need not take his retirement too seriously; he may drown his book, yet we must remember that while "book" (as so often the case with a word in Shakespeare) has more than one meaning, viz., the book of the necromancer, and the "book" of the theatre, it nevertheless conveys no allusion to the library or to literary work in general. For the poet's tastes and convictions we turn to an earlier passage in the play: "From mine own library . . . volumes that I prize above my dukedom"; or again, "the liberal arts . . . being all my study," arts that "O'erprized all popular rate." No doubt Shakespeare has a longing for leisure and retirement (he seems to have left "Henry VIII" unfinished); but he has little intention that his life shall rust in him unused. Let us rather think of him as returning to the scenes of his youth, where his beating mind will be open to the sweeter influences of earth and heaven, where, all passion spent, he may know the delight of contemplation, where every third thought shall be his grave.

To such retirement "The Tempest" is indeed a fitting prelude; it tells of long years of trouble that have brought resignation:—"let us not burthen our remembrance with A heaviness that's gone"; of repentance, reconciliation, forgiveness; of renewed delight in the fair scenes of nature; of renewed faith in God and belief in man; of labour accomplished, victory gained (V. 25-27, etc.); of love, joy, peace.

## (41) KING HENRY VIII, 1612

*Historical Particulars*

The play of "King Henry VIII" was being performed at the Globe Theatre, when "certain cannons being shot off at his (Henry the Eighth's) entry, some of the paper or other stuff wherewith one of them was stopped, did light on the thatch where . . . it kindled inwardly, and ran round like a train, consuming, in less than an hour, the whole house to the very ground." So Sir Henry Wotton writes on the 6th of June, 1613, of an event that "happened this week at the Bankside"; and it is the same writer who describes it as "a new play, called *All is True*, representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry the Eighth"; but Howes, detailing the event in his continuation of "Stow's Chronicle," gives to the drama the title by which we know it, "the house being filled with people to behold the play, viz., of Henry the Eighth"; and in a letter of June 30th, 1613, the Rev. Thomas Lockin writes from London to Sir Thomas Pickering: "The fire broke out no longer since than yesterday, while Burbage's company were acting at the Globe the play of 'Henry VIII';" and he adds, "there were shooting of certayne chambers etc."; "chambers discharged" is a stage direction in the play.

The alternative title, "*All is True*," seems indicated in the Prologue:

Such as give  
Their money out of hope they may believe  
May here find truth too.  
To rank our chosen truth with such a show.

About this time the titles of several of Shakespeare's plays were altered—or are recorded as alternative; "Henry IV" was "Hotspur," "The Merry Wives of Windsor" was "Sir John Falstaff," "Much Ado" was

"Benedick and Beatrice," "Julius Caesar" was "Caesar's Tragedy," "Twelfth Night" was "Malvolio," and so forth.

We have yet other accounts of this fatal fire, in which we may suppose that several of the original copies of Shakespeare's plays were lost, but these particulars belong to the life of Shakespeare; and we must now quote another passage from Sir H. Wotton's letter, which informs us that the play "was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage; the knights of the order, with their Georges and Garter, the guards with their embroidered coats, and the like; sufficient in truth within a while to make greatness familiar if not ridiculous."

Here we have interesting testimony to the spectacular aspect of "Henry VIII," which is a series of gorgeous pageants rather than a genuine drama.

As is explained in the next division, we must suppose that Fletcher was concerned in the production of the play as we have it, and he may have worked on it later than 1614, at which date he was writing for other companies than the king's. Possibly Shakespeare began the drama at a much earlier date; it was his practice to write a play at intervals, and to write more than one play at a time. Some think it was intended—the same has been said, perhaps as doubtfully, of "The Tempest"—to celebrate the marriage of Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine, 14th February, 1612-13; and we know that during the festivities which accompanied this event, several of Shakespeare's plays were acted before the royal party.

As "The Tempest" was full of the plantation of Virginia, so we may well believe that this undertaking, which was the talk of the nation, finds its way into "Henry VIII":

Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine,  
His honour, and the greatness of his name,  
Shall be, and make new nations.

But as these lines are in Fletcher's style—we may almost say his handwriting—and as a new interest was given to the Virginia enterprise by the charter of 1612, the passage will not help us in finding an earlier year for the play.

Finally, in regard to date, we may mention that the closing scene reads like a panegyric on James which might have welcomed him, possibly, soon after his accession; that Elizabeth could not have been flattered by the contrast between the picture of Anne Boleyn and that of Katherine; that the trial scene of Katherine is a companion to the one in which Hermione is wrongly accused in the "Winter's Tale"; and that the evidence of metre and style points to Shakespeare's latest period; and Sir H. Wotton's date of 1613 may well be accepted as approximate.

"Henry VIII" (probably because of joint authorship) is one of the few plays of Shakespeare that appeal to us from the stage as powerfully as from a book; its pageantry makes it popular, and it was revived by Sir H. Irving.

The material of the drama is derived from Holinshed, who incorporates "The Life of Wolsey," by Cavendish (1641); Hall's Chronicle was consulted by the dramatist, as also Foxe's "Acts and Monuments of the Church," first edition, 1563. There is the usual rearrangement and modification of the events of history, which are supposed to happen during seven days, with intervals. The Porter, the Old Lady, and Patience are new characters; the first of these may be compared with the Porter in "Macbeth," and the second with the Nurse in "Romeo and Juliet." Brandon is confused with another personage of that name; and it may be added that inaccuracies are rather abundant.

It is possible that the author or authors of "Henry VIII" had before them Samuel Rowley's "When you see Me you know Me," first printed in 1605; the resemblances are too striking to be due to mere coincidence.



*Critical Remarks*

Even if we are reading this play for the first time we can hardly fail to notice some marked peculiarities, it varies greatly in style and thought, it seems to have been composed piecemeal, not continuously, there is no orderly plot, no central figure, it is entirely lacking in unity of interest<sup>1</sup>

We have been accustomed to striking and sometimes strange inequalities in many of Shakespeare's dramas, but we have met with nothing quite like this, the play is almost too unequal and too disconnected to be interesting, though at times it is profoundly impressive

If we now make conjecture of the origin of these peculiarities, we may say that Shakespeare composed parts of the play at different periods of his career, and then put them roughly together at its close, or that he wrote the play in close partnership with another playwright, or that this other playwright finished the work which he had left incomplete, and we may add that whatever the occasion, the play was somewhat hastily put together

Of the three foregoing suppositions, the second is to be preferred, and if a coadjutor is admitted, it will be Fletcher, about this there is no doubt whatever. Here is an example of Fletcher's average style

And, as they rise to ripeness, still remember  
How they imp out your age! and when Time calls you  
I hat as an autumn flower you fall forget not  
How round about your hearse they hang like pennons!  
( Thierry and Theoderet )

Turning to "Henry VIII" we read

The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,  
And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely

<sup>1</sup> Possibly we have some explanation of this in the words of Sir Henry Wotton, quoted on a former page, who speaks of the play as 'representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII', and a further explanation may be found in the alternative title 'All is True,' which we are inclined to interpret, "art will suffer from historic realism"

His greatness is a ripening, nips his root  
And then he falls, as I do I have ventured

We glance at Fletcher again

Without the breach of faith I cannot hear you  
You hang upon my love like frosts on lilies  
( Humorous Lieutenant )  
Like winter nips the roses and the lilies  
( ' Custom of the Country ' )  
What a sweet modesty dwells round about em,  
And like a nipping morn pulls in their blossoms!  
( The Loyal Subject )

and then again at " Henry VIII "—the above extract also

Like the hly  
That once was mistress of the field and flourish'd  
I'll hang my head and perish  
This is the state of mine to day he puts forth  
The tender leaves of hope, to morrow blossoms

Evidently, Fletcher, if any, had a hand in the drama, here, are his weak rhythm and wearying cadence, his manner, his thought, his sweetness rather than strength. Could Shakespeare have written the jingling lines

By that sin fell the angels how can man then  
The image of his Maker, hope to win by 't  
A sure and safe one though thy master mis'd it

Of this rhythm the main characteristics are obvious—double endings generally, and emphatic monosyllables at the end of the line, or before the pause, e.g., *safe one* (With "hope to win by 't," cf Fletcher's "sound the depth on 't'")

Now let us have two or three lines of Shakespeare, or what we may reasonably suppose to be his work

Thus hulling<sup>1</sup> in  
The wild sea of my conscience I did steer  
Toward this remedy whereupon we are  
Now present here together

This is Shakespeare's later rhythm and manner, the

<sup>1</sup> This metaphor occurs again in Richard III and in Twelfth Night

rhythm and manner of "The Tempest," for example, where thought is impatient of rhythm, and force is sometimes as beautiful as form.

Finally, we may say that if Fletcher did not take part in "Henry VIII," then Shakespeare's experiments have resulted in some strange resemblances of style.

We need hardly add that the metrical tests bear out the other evidence of a double authorship; the double endings in Shakespeare's part are 1 in 3, in Fletcher's 1 in 1.7; the unstopt, or run-on lines, in Shakespeare's part are 1 in 2.03, in Fletcher's, 1 in 3.79; in Shakespeare's part there are 45 light endings and 37 weak endings; in Fletcher's, 7 light endings and 1 weak ending; in Shakespeare's part six rhymes occur, all accidental; in Fletcher's there are ten rhymes.<sup>1</sup> (See also pp. 455 and 457.)

The one serious objection to this co-operation of Fletcher lies in the fact that he appears to excel himself, especially in the death-scene of Katherine; some have supposed that here and elsewhere he was assisted by Massinger; possibly he was employed to re-write parts of the drama that had been lost in the fire, and he may have enriched his pen with the aid of his memory. But the death-scene of Katherine, which ends with the dying words of Laertes in "Hamlet"—"I can no more," is a remarkable piece of work; Johnson thought it "above any other part of Shakespeare's tragedies, and perhaps above any scene of any other poet"; and Mrs. Siddons thought Katherine the most natural character in Shakespeare. I think it possible that this scene, which is so touching in the simple truth of its pathos, gains some of its beauty from the very languor of Fletcher's style; but it is certainly better than any other of his work that I have read; would it be

<sup>1</sup> Spedding gives to Shakespeare Act I. sc. i. ii.; Act II. sc. iii. iv.; Act III. sc. ii. (as far as the exit of Henry); and Act V. sc. i. (which he thinks spoiled by being out of place, owing, perhaps, to some inferior hand); the rest of the play he assigns to Fletcher.

possible that like Shakespeare he could be great when a great occasion was presented? On the other hand the scene has little enough of Shakespeare's customary language, imagery, rhythm, and manner.

With regard to any share that Massinger might have had in the play, it may be mentioned that his presence is much more difficult to determine than that of Fletcher.

As I suggested above, this probable division of authorship may partly account for the divided interest of the play, its lack of proportion and cohesion; the last act, for example, seems to have lost its dramatic way altogether; as the Epiloguist acutely informs us:

All the expected good we are like to hear  
For this play at this time, is, only in  
The merciful construction of good women;  
*For such a one we showed them;*

and we might be content if the drama had shown us nothing more. Admirable are its representations of the use of adversity, its contrasts between temporal prosperity and eternal good.

On the other hand, the piecemeal character of the play is set forth in the Prologue; comedy will be excluded (yet the comic element appears in the persons of the "Old Lady" and the Porter); but there will be occasion, it tells us, for pity, for the belief in truth, and for the delight in pageantry; in other words, the tragedy will be spoilt by history, and spectacular display will come to the rescue of both.

As with the play, so with the characters; there is no leading character because there is no leading drama; Henry is variously and fitfully drawn, chiefly because the artist must devote his best time and pains to the canvas of Katherine; except perhaps at the close we are left in doubt as to whether he is noble or ignoble, a hero or a tyrant. Much the same may be said of Wolsey, Buckingham, and Anne Bullen; all this, however, is of less consequence as we possess the perfect picture of Katherine.

## (42) DOUBTFUL PLAYS

Some of the plays that have been assigned to Shakespeare, mostly on insufficient grounds, are noticed in this section; six of them, as we saw in Chapter V, were included in the Third Folio along with "Pericles"; and of these seven, which appeared between 1595 and 1613, four—"Pericles," "Sir John Oldcastle," "The London Prodigal," and "A Yorkshire Tragedy"—had been published with Shakespeare's name in full, the others with the initials W. S.

The following list of these doubtful plays might be extended, but to little profit; indeed few of those I have mentioned claim our serious attention. By far the most important is "The Two Noble Kinsmen," which is sometimes included in editions of Shakespeare—an honour which is also coveted by "Edward III."

(i) "THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN." In 1634 a Quarto volume was published bearing the title: "The Two Noble Kinsmen: Presented at the Blackfriars by the Kings Majesties servants, with great applause: Written by the memorable Worthies of their time; (Mr. John Fletcher, and Mr. William Shakspeare.) Gent. Printed at London by Tho. Cotes for John Waterson . . . 1634." The play was not printed in any of the Folio editions of Shakespeare, though it appeared in the second folio edition of Fletcher's Works, 1679.

In regard to the question of authorship, opinion is still divided, but the best authorities support the above title-page, and assign the play to Shakespeare and Fletcher. With this view I entirely concur, and I further believe that Fletcher worked alone some time after 1614 upon the drama as left unfinished by Shakespeare; and further, that Shakespeare's contributions, or most of them, were written near the end of his dramatic career. All this corresponds pretty closely to my remarks in the review of

"Henry VIII," to which I must refer my readers; there also will be found some examples of Fletcher's verse, which will serve us on this occasion:

And here the graces of our youths must wither  
Like a too-timely spring; here age must find us.  
(*"The Two Noble Kinsmen,"* II. ii. 27, 28.)

Two lines are few to quote, but the least experienced amongst us will find so many in this second scene of the Second Act that he will unhesitatingly refer it to Fletcher.

Now let us turn to a scene that is usually attributed to Shakespeare, the first of the First Act; matter, manner, music, all is changed; we pass from prettiness to power. But I must limit my brief remarks to the vocabulary, phrasing and thought. I choose these items of evidence, partly because I regard them as the most weighty, and partly because verse endings and the like mechanical tests have already been applied liberally. Moreover, in a case of divided authorship we cannot, as we might wish, base our judgment on the play as a whole, its scheme and structure, its general style; hence we must descend to these details. But we may not traverse the whole scene; one or two speeches must serve as examples, and I choose them at random: first that of the Second Queen (77-101); here we have "styled," "poise," "tenor," "glass of ladies," "flaming war," "shadow of his sword," "advance it," "woman's key," "blood-sized," "grinning at the moon,"—all these are more or less the property of Shakespeare; whereas the line in which the last occurs—or better, this—"Than a dove's motion when the head's plucked off," is as definitely and delightfully Shakespeare as a single line can well be: here we have what I have elsewhere called the pseudo-scientific attitude towards nature. There is plenty also of the scientific which is peculiarly Shakespeare's, as, for instance, in *"Troilus and Cressida"*; here we have one of his frequent references to the centre of the earth (l. 115); here also plenty of nature as

he saw it through Pliny and otherwise—"as ospreys do the fish, subdue before they touch" (l. 138-9). So also we have the confusedly drawn-out metaphor—

Your sorrow beats so ardently upon me  
That it shall make a counter-reflect 'gainst  
My brother's heart, and warm it to some pity  
'I though it were made of stone.

And we might compare this with "grief boundeth where it falls, etc.," in "Richard II." But I had better give my remaining space to the proof of my opinion that the date of all this is of Shakespeare's latest period. The osprey figure quoted above will be found in "Coriolanus" (IV. vii. 34); the minnows (l. 116) figure in that play; or if we wish for a closer resemblance, I will compare "Leave not out a jot of the sacred ceremony" with "Neither will they hate one jot of ceremony." ("Coriolanus," IV. ii. 45.) But many other plays of Shakespeare's later period are here represented. So we might deal—with results even more striking—with the First Queen's speech (ll. 174-186). But I will turn to a scene in which we may find Shakespeare and Fletcher side by side; in the first scene of the Fifth Act Fletcher begins and writes some seventeen lines, apparently to give dramatic position to the magnificent supplication of the rival knights and their lady which are in Shakespeare's most unmistakable and best manner. One element of Shakespeare I will select—and again, one among hundreds—the "aged cramp" of l. 110; this is the "aged cramps" (*i.e.*, cramps to which the aged are liable) in "The Tempest," where also we have (in the same sense) "old cramps."

To conclude, I append a distribution of the play between the two authors. To Fletcher we may assign the Prologue and the Epilogue; also parts of Act I. ii; also Act II. ii.-vi.; III. iii.-vi.; IV. i. ii.; V. ii.; and in the course of revision he may here and there have put his hand to the portions assigned to Shakespeare in the foregoing (p. 457).

As was true of "Henry VIII," the play suffers severely from the double authorship. We miss Shakespeare especially in the underplot, which, though it attempts to copy him as occasion serves, is poor, and imperfectly related to the main story. But the whole drama is so disorganised that minute analysis is barely profitable; the character of Emilia, for example, is drawn in colours so discordant that the picture is confused.

The "Knights Tale" of Chaucer, which Shakespeare had before him when writing "A Midsummer Night's Dream," supplied the authors of "The Two Noble Kinsmen" with their main plot and a good deal of their matter. Two other plays on the subject had already appeared—"Palaemon and Arcyte," by R. Edwardes, acted in 1566, and "Palamon and Arsett," purchased by Henslowe in 1590. These are lost. The song at the opening of the First Act is noticed on p. 98.

(ii) "EDWARD III." "The Raigne of King Edward the third" was first published in 1596, and it was reprinted in 1599, 1609, 1617 and 1625. Like Shakespeare's histories, it is based chiefly on Holinshed; but it incorporates a story in "The Palace of Pleasure" (see p. 168); Froissart was also consulted. To discover Shakespeare's part in "The Two Noble Kinsmen" was not a matter of much difficulty; but, as in the case of "Henry VI," our task here is a different one; if in the play of "Edward III" we have any work of Shakespeare's hand, it is of his early, unformed and varying style, characterized mainly by imitation of Marlowe, and not easily identified. On the other hand, we may assume that the play before us is the work of one writer, and therefore judge it on its merits as a whole—and thus tested it cannot be regarded as a drama by Shakespeare. There is nothing in the dramatic scheme and scope that suggests even his immature genius, nothing in the characterization. As to the style, which is of varying merit, and with this, the versification—for the two



should not be separated—we have passages that, taken by themselves, look like Shakespeare's work; but these will often prove to be imitations; and there are abundant weaknesses and un-Shakespearean elements of word, or phrase, or figure, or rhythm. Let us briefly examine the finest part of the play, the Second Act; the very first lines—

I might perceive his eye in her eye lost,  
His ear to drink her sweet tongue's utterance,

is clearly an echo of

My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye;  
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.  
(*"A Midsummer Night's Dream,"* I. i. 189, 190.)

In the eighth line we meet with the inversion "Attracted had the cherry blood from his," which is not like Shakespeare even at his earliest. So we may proceed through the whole, at every step obtaining like results; but I must give only two or three illustrations to show that the writer is indebted to the earlier plays of Shakespeare, especially "Richard III" and "Richard II":—"Fly at a pitch above the soar of praise." ("Edward III.") "How high a pitch his resolution soars." ("Richard II.") "Ah, what a world of descant makes my soul Upon this voluntary ground of love." ("Edward III.") "For on that ground I'll build a holy descant." ("Richard III.") "But to corrupt the author of my blood." ("Edward III.") "O thou, the earthly author of my blood." ("Richard II.") "And peize their deeds with weight of heavy lead." ("Edward III.") "Lest leaden slumber peize me down." ("Richard III.")

Once more, these are specimens of what occur in abundance; and there are, besides, reminiscences of other plays, especially of "Henry V" and of Shakespeare's "Sonnets," including, of course, the well-known line (see p. 88) "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The arguments are strongest in favour of Shakespeare being borrower;

I therefore conclude that the play, which has some merit of its own, is, if not by Shakespeare, mostly an imitation of his early manner.

It may be added that Mr. Fleay thinks the love-story or "episode" (Act I., Sc. 2, and Act II) is by Shakespeare; and he finds that in this episode the proportion of rhyming lines is 1 to 7, and of feminine endings 1 to 10, whereas in the other parts of the play they are respectively as 1 to 20 and 1 to 25. But these results must be employed with caution. It may further be mentioned that Tennyson remarked to Mr. Fleay, "I can trace the master's hand all through the play."

(iii) *ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM*. This play was first published in 1592, and its title page describes it as "The lamentable and true Tragedie of M. Arden of Feversham in Kent. Who was most wickedlyc murdered, by the meanes of his disloyall and wanton wyfe, who for the love she bare to one Mosbie, hyred two desperat ruffins, Blackwill and Shakbag, to kill him."

The murder which is dramatized in the tragedy, took place at Feversham in 1551. This presentation of "simple truth" without the aid of "glozing stuff," this "naked tragedy" as the Epilogue styles it, is not in Shakespeare's manner; even "Titus Andronicus" is literary throughout. But in some respects "Arden of Feversham" is the opposite of "Edward III"; it vies with Shakespeare in conception and execution, in originality and intensity, in characterization, passion, and occasional pathos; but the style and the verse do not so nearly approach the Shakespeare of 1591, as in the former play these remind us of the Shakespeare of two or three years later. Here and there we have something like Shakespeare in the text, but

the expression "scarlet ornaments" of "Edward III" is found in Sonnet 142, and in each case the borrowing seems forced. Other phrases from "Edward III" are found in Shakespeare's later plays; e.g., "laurel victory" in "Antony and Cleopatra."

more commonly it reads like work of some other and a mature writer and thinker :

For, as sharp-witted poets, whose sweet verse  
Make heavenly gods break off their nectar draughts,  
And lay their ears down to the lowly earth,

is an estimate of poetry that I should not readily attribute even to the author of "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

The play, which was reprinted in 1599 and 1633, was first assigned to Shakespeare in the edition of 1770 this was printed by Edward Jacob, who resided at Feversham.

(iv) "A YORKSHIRE TRAGEDY" is another drama founded on a contemporary incident—the murder in 1604 of his two young children by "Walter Calverly, of Calverly in Yorkshire, Esquire," who also stabbed his wife and attempted the life of another child. The deed was recorded in a ballad of 1605, and the tragedy "Not so New as Lamentable and true. . . . Written by W. Shakespeare," was published in 1608. In the Stationers' Register of May in the same year it is stated to be "by Wylliam Shakespeare." This play, which contains a good deal of prose, is characterized by a power too crude to be Shakespeare's in

The surest way to charm a woman's tongue  
Is—break her neck ; a politician did it ;

and resemblances of thought and style which give "Arden of Feversham" some title to consideration are not so apparent in "A Yorkshire Tragedy."

I must add fewer particulars of other plays that are too doubtfully connected with Shakespeare's name. (v) "The Merry Devil of Edmonton," published in 1608, has merit, but not enough, as I think, for Shakespeare. (vi) "The Tragedy of Locrine," printed in 1595, has less merit ; mostly, it is poor stuff :—"Accursed stars, damned and accursed stars To abbreviate my noble father's life." (vii) "Thomas, Lord Cromwell," written about 1600, and pub-

lished in 1602, is as devoid of poetry and Shakespeare as was "The Troublesome Raigne of King John." Artistically or morally (viii) "The London Prodigal" (c. 1605) is a comedy quite beneath Shakespeare. (ix) "The Birth of Merlin," published 1662, "Written by William Shakespeare and William Rowley" has certainly no claim on the first of these two names. (x) "The Comedy of Mucedorus," first published in 1598, but of earlier date, and weak workmanship, has a few passages of merit—later interpolations—which some critics without good reason assign to Shakespeare. (xi) The "Pleasant Comedie of Faire Em, The Millers Daughter of Manchester: With the loue of William the Conqueror," though not published till 1631, had been acted "by the right Honourable the Lord Strange his seruants," and had been laughed at by Greene in 1591 in his "Farewell to Folly."<sup>1</sup> (xii) "The Puritaine, or the Widdow of Watling-Streete," a comedy published in 1607 as being "Written by W. S.," is a rather poor picture of the times, and certainly not painted by Shakespeare. (xiii) "The first part of . . . the Life of Sir John Oldcastle, the good Lord Cobham," 1600, is a very average piece of work by no less than four collaborators, Drayton, Hathaway, Wilson, and Munday. Some of the copies bear Shakespeare's name on their title-page. It was acted in 1599, and was licensed (with the Second Part) 11th August, 1600, as the "History of the Life of Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham." Only the First Part is extant. See also Sect. 21 of this Chapter.

I may add that Shakespeare's authorship has been claimed for certain passages in plays by other dramatists; and no doubt he gave a helping hand, especially at the outset, to others of his profession; but this subject is beyond the scope of the present volume.

<sup>1</sup> Both "Fair Em" and "The London Prodigal" seem to make an attack upon Greene; they contain one line in common, and are possibly by the same author.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF SHAKESPEARE

#### (a) *General View*

WE have in popular use many terms of doubtful meaning, which nevertheless are scarcely bettered by any attempt at exact definition, and such, as I think, is this term *philosophy*, especially as applied to a poet.<sup>1</sup> Let us use it briefly for his view and explanation of things in general, his criticism of life; which criticism, if it be noble, will uplift our intellectual and moral being, while the form and melody of his work delights and beautifies our emotional being.

But again, let us not fall into the error of dividing what poetry has so delightfully joined together. I grant that the writer of poetic drama has more scope for his philosophy, and is more professedly a critic of life than the lyric poet, or even than the epic poet. Nevertheless, his philosophy without his verse would be but a vain thing—a body without a soul; on the other hand, the philosophy of play or poem—as I regard it—is the only philosophy the world need take into any serious account.

Possibly I shall make my meaning clearer if I quote a short passage from my Introduction to Tennyson<sup>2</sup>: “They (philosophical poems) are a feature of the whole of Tennyson’s poetry; that must be evident to all who have read these chapters. Is it a fact to be regretted? I think not.

<sup>1</sup> In a less popular sense, of course, it means (a) an extension of science, (b) a system of thought or doctrine.

<sup>2</sup> “Temple Encyclopaedic Primers.” But see pp. 166 and 391.

‘Your poetry,’ said Jowett, ‘has an element of philosophy, more to be considered than any regular philosophy in England.’ ‘I have a great conception,’ said Mr. Gladstone, in a letter to Hallam Tennyson, ‘of your father as a philosopher. The “sage” of Chelsea (a genius too) was small in comparison with him.’ The truth, as it appears to me, is this. Not only philosophy so called, but even the exactest science, is all a guess; and we can tolerate, admire, enjoy, profit by a guess in poetry; we can only resent it—some time or other—in prose.” Here I will add a word of explanation; the philosophy of Democritus is now a subject of amused curiosity; the same philosophy in the verse of Lucretius is a joy for ever.

But there is another general aspect of the subject, not wholly distinct from the former, which should detain us; the philosophy of the poet is not only the microscope and telescope of the moral world; it is not only the wisest philosophy that mortals dare to demand; it is also the most potent, the most universal in its appeal.

This, again, I have noticed in the book just quoted (Introduction to Tennyson, p. 16): “Certainly the poet is an artist, not a teacher; so much the better; the preacher may not always convince, nor the taskmaster instruct, nor the orator rouse us, nor the lawgiver make us law-abiding; but the poet who clothes truth in garments of beauty has power to entice all men into nobleness—‘One poor poet’s scroll, and with his word She shook the world.’”

And if this is true of any poet, it is certainly true of Shakespeare. To enumerate the problems of mind and soul that have been pondered over by this great thinker would be impossible; and we may say, and not without some degree of assurance, that his vision, whether mental or spiritual, was more comprehensive and far-reaching than that of any other writer; that what he saw he embodied in forms more beautiful and more abiding than any other poet has done; and that their influence is one of our best

securities for maintaining whatever is wise and fair and good in our human nature.

Our remaining reflection, though a personal one, is not the least important; it was absolutely impossible that Shakespeare, during more than twenty years of authorship, should *consistently* tell all these great truths, and not feel them: "He saw thro' life and death, thro' good and ill, *He saw thro' his own soul.*" If this last line is true of any among the sons of men, it is true of this man, whose modesty was as marvellous as his genius.

(b) *Views of Love.*

It is a matter of interest and profit to all students of Shakespeare's various philosophy to ask themselves the question, "Which of our human actions, passions, or aspirations did Shakespeare himself consider to be the most important?" To this question I answer without any hesitation, "It was love."

Love, "the name bubbled by every wave of Hippocrene," is none the less a diapason that closes full in Shakespeare. Of all this I have no doubt whatever.

"Poetry," says Bacon, "chooses for subject commonly wars and love"; and "love," says Shakespeare, "is the star to every wandering bark"; and if it be true that "there's nothing we can call our own but love," then we may take it for granted that love is the fundamental chord of the thought-music of Shakespeare.

But to deal justly with Shakespeare's treatment of a subject which is vast as the universe, a passion which reaches from earth to heaven, which "bears it out even to the edge of doom" (Sonnet 116), would require a separate volume. I can only call attention to its importance, and insist on its imperative claim to a fuller exposition as the leading theme of Shakespeare.

Just now I declined to construct a definition of philosophy in poetry; but some explanation must be offered

in regard to the word "love." For instance, we read in the Sonnets, "You and love are all my argument," and until we look more closely we may suppose that the love of man for woman is the subject of these poems; but in Chap. VI., Sect. iv., we learn that it is otherwise. The word "lover," moreover, in Shakespeare's day was commonly applied to the bond of affection among men. Even in our day "love" is a word of varying significance, and I propose to deal with the subject under the three heads of sexual love, love of the family, and social love, which may include friendship. But all classification is more or less arbitrary. These instincts which impel us to supply "felt deficiencies," these desires of men that good shall be for ever present with them, have a common origin; and when we speak of the love of God, we merely add the yet mightier instinct that binds the other three in a sacred bond, and implies their permanence and their perfection. Hence also the word "love" in its general sense, which is but the combination and continuation of these four.

This higher and wider love, especially as applied to the deity, belongs rather to a notice of Shakespeare's religion, which I place later. Here we have chiefly to consider the first three of the fundamental instincts, and we find that the sexual, as it is the most powerful, is a prevailing theme of poetry, and naturally the one most present to Shakespeare: "Never durst poet touch a pen to write Until his ink were temper'd with love's sighs" ("Love's Labour's Lost," IV. iii. 347); "Hang there like fruit, my soul, Till the tree die!" ("Cymbeline," V. v. 264, 265). Thus Shakespeare reviews the passion from its first young dream to its fruition through all the years of wedlock.

But not only is this love a leading subject of the plays and the poems of Shakespeare, it is also dealt with by him more fully and more justly than by any other writer. Let us read through the poet's work; we shall begin with the commonplace courtships of a Warwickshire village,



and then pass on from phase to phase of the mighty passion, till, as I pointed out on p. 175, in *Miranda* we reach an ideal of love that a great dramatist might be expected to put upon his stage when all other types had been exhausted.

Even Dante's outlook on love was less wide, less human, and therefore also less divine;<sup>1</sup> and I do not recollect any other poet who calls for mention under this head.

I wish to deal fairly with this subject; I will therefore at once raise and meet the only plausible objection, namely, that the women of Shakespeare are not educated in accordance with our modern and presumably sounder theories. But on this very account we find in Shakespeare nothing whatever of the "Wayward modern mind Dissecting passion." His position was unique; as we have seen (pp. 206 and 207), he stood between that earlier age which made woman at its will a slave, an idol, or a toy, and the no less "wayward" modern age that too often disregards the sacred difference of sex, and so destroys both woman and love. Therefore he has for all time caught up the whole of love and uttered it.

And although his wide survey of love, his reach that exceeds his grasp, his stern distinction between love and passion, his stern demand for mutual respect, his doctrine of "perfection," though a complete view of these and much beside is beyond our scope, we may nevertheless glance at a single play, one of the earlier plays, where we shall find only the germs of the poet's doctrine, and on that very account find it easier to appreciate their marvellous development. I will choose the play of "*Twelfth Night*," which represents not only the main

<sup>1</sup> The belief in woman as the complement of man, this, perfectly embodied in Shakespeare, gave also to his dramas their highest perfection, their superiority to the literatures of Greece and Rome, their ideal humanity; it produced, as it was produced by, the great Elizabethan age. (This is to some extent true of Spenser also.) See also pp. 387 and 388.

elements of love, but also the leading varieties of lovers. Whether this result was conscious on the part of the author, and allied to his primary dramatic purpose, or whether it was sub-conscious as attending upon it, or unconscious and incidental to it, concerns us not here; the fact remains that in "Twelfth Night" we have a recapitulation of Shakespeare's—I will not say convictions, for he has none at this early date—but of Shakespeare's theories on the subject of love, his opinions, his experiences up to the time of writing.

We will glance first at the characters; no less than eight of these are "poor fancy's followers"; and they are mostly distinct types; there is no such proportion in any other play, with the possible exception of "Love's Labour's Lost" and "As You Like It."

But the word "fancy" used above must detain us for a moment; a right understanding of the term is essential to a right understanding of Shakespeare's most complex opinions of love. He has a threefold use for the word "fancy"; it may have its common meaning; it may stand for the false and fickle love, as opposed to the true and constant; or, and this more frequently, it may denote love absolutely.

In the second and more or less disparaging sense, it occurs in the first scene of the play (I. i. 14), "So full of shapes is fancy"; in its more frequent and neutral sense of "love," it will be found in II. v. 29, "Should she fancy, it should be one of my complexion." But the best example of the word in the sense of lighter love is given in the well-known song in "The Merchant of Venice"—"Tell me where is fancy bred"; and as these words are often misunderstood, and as the song is the foundation of Shakespeare's love philosophy (*i.e.*, up to the date of "Twelfth Night"), I may take this opportunity of explaining them.

At least one half of the motive of the song may be found

in the following passage from Bacon's "Natural History" (x. 944), where the origin of love, more or less judicial as Bacon repeats it, is a suggestion from the Greek: "As for love, the Platonists, some of them, go so far as to hold that the spirit of the lover doth pass into the spirit of the person loved, which causeth desire of return into the body whence it was emitted. . . . And this is observed likewise, that the aspects which procure love are not gazings, but sudden glances and dartings of the eye . . . fascination is ever by the eye." Here from many similar expressions we may select Plato's ἀπορροή τοῦ κάλλους,<sup>1</sup> which Shakespeare thus reproduces in "Twelfth Night" (I. v. 315-317):

Methinks I feel this youth's perfections  
With an invisible and subtle stealth  
To creep in at mine eyes ;<sup>2</sup>

and in the following song he renders other Greek phrases by "in the head," and "It is engendered in the eyes," and then proceeds to amplify and refine upon the crude theory :

Tell me where is fancy bred,  
Or in the heart or in the head ?  
How begot, how nourished ?  
Reply, reply.  
It is engendered in the eyes,<sup>3</sup>  
With gazing fed ; and fancy dies  
In the cradle where it lies,  
Let us all ring fancy's knell.

That is to say, "The lighter love is not a matter of the

<sup>1</sup> "Phædrus," 251 B. Cf. also Euripides—"Ἔρως, ὁ κατ' ὀφθαλμῶν στάσεις πῶλον, εἰσάγων γλυκύαν ψυχῆς χάριν κ.τ.λ. (Hipp. 525 sqq.); Milton's "Ladies whose bright eyes Raju influence" is probably astrological.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also Bacon's "The eye is the gate of the affection." For Shakespeare's doctrine of love at first sight, see next page.

<sup>3</sup> Compare: "Young men's love then lies Not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes" ("Romeo and Juliet," II. iii. 67, 68). For the part played by the eyes and the heart, see also Sonnets 14, 17, 20, 23, 24, 46, 114, 137, 141, 148, etc.; and in "Love's Labour's Lost," passages often akin to the former are: IV. iii. 308, 317, 345; II. i. 241; V. ii. 828; II. i. 228, etc.

heart, but of mere transient feeling; it begins and ends with looks of passion ("sudden glances and dartings of the eye"). Let us have done with this sort of love—"Fie on sinful fantasy . . . kindled with unchaste desire" ("Merry Wives of Windsor," V. v. 97, 98.).

Now we turn to the poet's account of the higher or true love:

*Love first learned in a lady's eyes  
Lives not alone immured in the brain;  
But, with the motion of all elements,  
Courses as swift as thought in every power,  
And gives to every power a double power,  
Above their functions and their offices.  
It adds a precious seeing to the eye.<sup>1</sup>*

("Love's Labour's Lost," IV. iii. 327-333.)

This love, though likewise "engendered in the eyes," and quite consistent with love "at first sight," is a matter not of the head, but of the heart; or rather, of the whole being. So much we may learn from Shakespeare's use of the word "fancy."

Returning now to the characters of the play, I may refer the reader to my edition of "Twelfth Night" (Introduction, pp. xxxv-xxxviii); but here I must add that Viola represents the middle period (p. 175) of Shakespeare's love philosophy, and she forms a connecting-link between Rosaline and Imogen, or Juliet and Miranda. Nor must I omit some reference to the theory of "perfection" which, glanced at in "Twelfth Night," is stated more clearly in "King John," II. i. 437-440: "He is the half part of a blessed man Left to be finished by such as she, . . . Whose fulness of perfection lies in him."

This doctrine marks a great advance in Shakespeare's

<sup>1</sup> Here again we may compare Bacon, "Natural History" 'The affections, no doubt, do make the spirits more powerful and active, and especially those affections which draw the spirits into the eyes; which are two, love and envy.' And as to the play, "Love's Labour's Lost," it is full of love's antitheta; e.g., "Formed by the eye, and therefore like the eye, Full of strange shapes," etc. etc. (V. ii. 772, 773.). See also pp. 30-32.

love philosophy, for if we have recourse to the Greek we get only half of the truth: "I have read Aristotle's 'Problems,' which saith that woman receiveth perfection by the man," (Marston, "Antonio and Mellida," 1602). I may add that this double, reciprocal, and modern doctrine of wedded love ("Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself" (Tennyson), or as Lamb has phrased it, "to seek perfection in union"), is implied by Shakespeare in most of the later plays.

Thus early, moreover, the poet is a champion of the sacred rights of love, as we read in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," V. v. 231-243, which we may contrast with "the law of Athens" in "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

This leads us to speak briefly of Shakespeare's own experience as presented in "Twelfth Night" (II. iv. 31-41). There is at least some ground for the conjecture—though it is possible to be over confident on this point—that a personal element almost certainly found its way into the passage. But though the poet may speak here and elsewhere in the Scene with some undertone of bitterness as well as self-reproach, the impression we receive from the entire play is that of a dispassionate inquirer into the principles of love and marriage, and of one already far in advance of predecessors or contemporaries.

And this shall be our first reflection as we proceed to the more general treatment of the subject by Shakespeare, who, as I repeat, made it his most important subject, and, as I think, rightly made it such. The whole truth of love was discovered by Shakespeare as far as man may hope to attain this or any other truth; but the discovery was that flower of knowledge and fruit of wisdom which began with the slow growth of root and stem and branch. Herein lies the chief difference between Bacon and Shakespeare. Bacon's philosophy of love, so far as his writings are concerned, was arrested in the growth; it bore no fruit; its branches never put forth so much as a flower

(p. 142). Of what the later man thought and felt and realized, we have no reliable record. But in his poems and dramas Shakespeare's philosophy of love is fully revealed to us; and it is his most valuable legacy to the world.

"I will make this clearer by another reference to "Twelfth Night," where, as I have pointed out, we have opinions rather than convictions. If we look more closely into the play, we shall find Bacon and Shakespeare together in what I may call the antithetical or speculative stage of their inquiries. They are as the Duke himself, who speaks in an alternative fashion; for example, in I. i. 14, 15, and II. iv. 17-20; in II. iv. 100-101, and I. i. 35-39; in II. iv. 34-36, and II. iv. 96-98.

But since it has been customary with editors to account for these contradictory statements on the subject of love by assuming that they are intended by Shakespeare to illustrate the character of the Duke, I will point to the varying statements of Olivia; or again, if she too closely resembles the Duke, I will call attention to the *same differences of opinion in the speeches of Viola*, as for example in II. ii. 30-34, and II. iv. 106-108.

Further, we make every allowance for the dramatic character of the speaker; as also for the fact that Shakespeare in this instance, as in many others, incorporates to the verge of inconsistency the diverse hints that he encounters in his originals. Yet as we follow these varying reflections, and still more if we traverse the whole play, we may well fancy that we are reading some of Bacon's "Antitheta"; and if we glance at the other plays of Shakespeare, first as they precede "Twelfth Night," and then for a short distance as they come after it, we shall be still more inclined to think we have the "Antitheta" before us. Yet again, though Bacon breaks off as it would seem abruptly, we must remember that Shakespeare pursues the mighty theme throughout the long series of plays

that represent his life and the whole discipline of his thought. Had he stopped at "Hamlet," the world would have lost its high ideal of love—a love entrancing, refined, ennobled almost beyond the conception of man.

To follow the great master in his quest till he beholds the vision of Marina, Perdita, Hermione, Imogen, Miranda, is, I repeat, impossible here; but my task is accomplished if I have pointed out the way to others,<sup>1</sup> and have urged them not to falter; and, more important still, if I have warned them not to listen to such<sup>2</sup>—and they are many—as have faltered by the way.

(b) *Religion and Politics.*

Love, then, is the central theme of "Twelfth Night" as of Shakespeare; and as nothing is more instructive than a view of opinions in the making, the same play will serve equally well for a first glance at countless other subjects that may be included under the head of Shakespeare's philosophy; and from these I will select his religious, political, and social doctrines.

"Policy I hate," said Sir Andrew (III. ii. 34), "I had as lief be a Brownist as a politician"; and although the words "policy" and "politician" have not quite their modern meaning, yet the question of Shakespeare's politics is as closely allied to that of his religious opinions as Church is to State. A few remarks on the politics of Shakespeare will therefore come naturally within the scope of my other inquiry; indeed, nothing better has been said by way of summarizing the poet's religious views than the well-known, "He was a Tory and a gentleman," unless we substitute the remark of Coleridge that he was "a philosophical aristocrat." For his creed, like his politics,<sup>3</sup> and his views of love, was originally at least con-

<sup>1</sup> See also the next chapter.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 391.

<sup>3</sup> That the play warns us against affectation if not against innovation in politics as well as religion may be inferred from many passages.

servative, conventional, autobiographical, personal,<sup>1</sup> and, I might add, classical; but like these views of love, it varied with his years and his career. And as in the case of love, so in this of religion, we discover in "Twelfth Night" a transition stage of Shakespeare's mental and moral development—the antithetical, or analytical or judicial, and always speculative stage." "What thinkest thou of his opinion? . . . I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve his opinion" (IV. ii. 58-60). Although at present his faith has not centre everywhere, yet whenever he stops to weigh his optimism against his pessimism, he finds that the former scale is the heavier. Indeed, he is tolerant, very, for his time; already his views are almost liberal; but he believes in the Church as vitally related to the State; he distrusts—and the same is true of his bearing towards the masses—he distrusts the new sects, but he will not hasten to condemn them, and certainly not to disdain them.

Such, as it appears to me, is the first consideration to be borne in mind by all who care to ask and answer the customary questions: "What was Shakespeare's creed?" "Did he absolutely condemn the Brownist?" "Was Malvolio 'a kind of Puritan'?" "Or did Shakespeare worship under a dome of nobler span than the temple made with human hands; and if so, what was his faith, his divine philosophy?" Did he "think nobly of the soul, and reverently of the 'Divinity that shapes our ends,' and trustfully of 'the life to come'?" ("Macbeth," I. vii. 7). But here, as in my treatment of the problem of love in Shakespeare, I do not so much intend to answer these questions myself, as to throw out hints that may enable others to answer them. Yet I may repeat that only those answers can be

<sup>1</sup> A simple trust in God, and a manly optimism, are the main features of his earlier favourite character, Henry V.; and it is at least an interesting fact that the later characters for whom he has a special regard, viz., Brutus, Hamlet, and Prospero, all use the word "Providence" with an extra-dramatic reverence. See also p. 391.



reliable which take into account the poet's philosophical tendencies, his judicial methods, his large-heartedness, his faculty of humour. He will analyze, not sneer at innovations; he will smile at the social extravagances of the Puritan, but he will not scoff at the earnest seeker after truth. "Thy exquisite reason, dear knight?" Such is the calm question wherewith Shakespeare rebukes the contemptible Sir Andrew who would beat a Puritan like a dog (II. iii. 153-4); and of course Sir Andrew has no exquisite reason. Moreover, it is into the mouth of the same contemptible character that the poet puts the other disparaging reference (III. ii. 34): "I had as lief be a Brownist as a politician," and by so doing he must seem to discourage intolerance in religion. And even the social and intellectual failings of the new sect were treated by Shakespeare with an extraordinary tolerance; for he was almost silent while his contemporary dramatists, as was most natural, were loud in their condemnation of a creed that was to threaten the very existence of the theatre.<sup>1</sup>

As to Malvolio, he is never anything more than "a kind of Puritan," and that "sometimes"; he is a man "sick of self-love," who played his first part in "G'Ingan-nati"; and he falls a victim, not to the hypocritical cant of a sectarian but to the inordinate vanity of a weakling.

Much, therefore, regarding Shakespeare's religion or his politics may be gathered from a single play; but I should repeat that the full scope of the poet's doctrine of church or state or any other problem of our complex being—and he has something to say about all of them, and more than any other writer—must be obtained from the whole work, and the whole man.

But my reference to these will be as brief as it has been to the play which served so aptly as an introduction to

<sup>1</sup> Even in his darkest mood, as in "Measure for Measure," he may be severe, but is by no means intolerant; he condemns not the creed, but the hypocrisy.

the wider study; indeed, I must offer not more than the conclusions that have been arrived at after many years of earnest inquiry. From the dramas and poems of Shakespeare we seem to gather that in regard to these problems of life and mind and soul his first attitude was mostly conventional; next, his spirit of analysis left him sceptical; later, his philosophy made him more tolerant, his judicial habit of mind rendered him impartial; but the god within him and his quest of the ideal triumphed ultimately over both his philosophy and his judgement: for his final conceptions and convictions of morals, or love, or life, as we have seen them in "*The Tempest*,"<sup>1</sup> are the most profound and the noblest in literature.

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 360 and 361, where I point to the marvellous interweaving—at their very finest—of the philosophical and moral threads which run through the plays preceding. This aspect of Shakespeare—his ethical growth and its culmination—though of the first importance, has been strangely neglected; hence, for example, the unsound opinions of Johnson on Shakespeare's dealings with love (see also Potts' "*Promus*," pp. 479, 480). I have traced the poet's moral development under this head, and the reader would do well to follow him in his other quests (pp. 360 and 361). I will also state the facts that should win the student to his work; if what I have asserted (p. 308) of ethical progress is true, then it is equally true that to maintain this progress should be the whole duty of man; and that Shakespeare so maintained it, will be evident to all who read his writings as far as possible in a chronological order, ending with "*The Tempest*." I must, however, repeat that this development of Shakespeare's ethics is human, and therefore subject to fluctuation; take, for example, his types of male character, as they ascend from self-interest to charity; we have a series of historic types, ending with a magnificent first attempt at the ideal in *Henry V*; we have the low, the humorous, and—most abundant—the conventional types, but often ennobled by love. Then, after 1600, we first note a larger proportion of "good" men among the minor characters; now, too, as if depressed, the poet seeks relief in the melancholy of *Hamlet*, the worldly wisdom of *Ulysses*, or the rage of *Lear*; he rallies over his study of *Coriolanus*; finds a purer relief in the innocence of youth and the ecstasy of its love; and, finally, in his latest and highest mood, he creates *Prospero*, an ideal of man so exalted that it touches Deity.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE ART OF SHAKESPEARE

## I. SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMA

AS I have hinted on a former page, a great poet is always a great philosopher; he tells great truths because he feels them; the power of utterance and the range of vision are one. And if I have reserved a chapter in which I may deal with Shakespeare as an artist apart from Shakespeare as a philosopher, the distinction is not real, but provisional, and made chiefly for convenience of exposition.

As will be seen later, this is especially true when we trace the growth of Shakespeare's art; the evolution of form closely corresponds to the evolution of soul; and the poet's advance in technique is not seldom measured by a reference to his ethical progress.

"A good poet," says Ben Jonson, "is made as well as born"; and in order to appreciate the art of Shakespeare, there is nothing more instructive than to examine its development. This development is unique in literature, especially at the outset. A poetic genius, the mightiest birth of time, emerges from some bucolic obscurity; he stands almost bewildered among a multitude of new poetic forms and tendencies; and he is impelled mostly by circumstance,<sup>1</sup> and that often trivial, to create the

<sup>1</sup> Other intentions than the strictly dramatic may have entered into the composition of plays like "King Lear," "Troilus and Cressida," "Measure for Measure."

noblest achievement of literature, the Romantic Drama, composed chiefly in rhymeless verse.

Of course other writers besides Shakespeare helped to found—some also to perfect—this Romantic Drama, but his share in the achievement is so great that we may fairly identify it with his name.

Of the threefold sources of this drama as indicated on page 11, we may add here that from the classics was derived much of its symmetry, its music, and its idealism; from the mediæval source came its complexity, its romance, and its wit; while the popular and religious plays of native growth added not a little of its seriousness, its humour, its realism, and its humanity.

Next we may glance as briefly at the literary aspects of Shakespeare's dramatic work. I have stated already that the form of verse raises literature to a higher level than even the form of drama; and blank verse, again, reaches a higher level than rhyming verse. And here we may contrast the poetic drama and the novel as forms of literary art, and realize the immense superiority of the drama, especially as Shakespeare wrote it, that is to say, with a good deal of the novel thrown in—thanks to his genius and the bareness of the Elizabethan theatre.

Again, speaking generally, as drama became more ideal in substance, so also it became more ideal in form, as the dramatic unities will testify, or this blank verse of Shakespeare; and in the future it may be still further idealized with the aid of music and song. I refer to the Opera, which has scarcely attained to its highest perfection.

Meanwhile Shakespeare was the first to combine successfully the acting of a play with the ideal utterance of verse, and I recollect no other instance of very good poetic drama suitable for stage representation at long intervals of time. This may be partly due to the fact that he also employs prose, for dialogue differs greatly in

regard to its ideal capabilities; and a judicious use of idealized prose is not the least among the merits of Shakespeare.

But in his dealings with the more dramatic elements of drama, with plot, underplot, action, and character, Shakespeare is not less original and supreme; for example, he infused new life into the lifeless product of the unities by adjusting novel complexities to a nobler symmetry; his construction of tragic plot was often as new as it was admirable; his employment of underplot was as striking as it was successful; and his unsurpassed genius for the creation of character is too well known to need any testimony whatever.

But I can only touch upon these dramatic points, which require a separate treatise, and my remarks must have special reference to the literary quality of Shakespeare's work; this, however, as was explained in the Introductory Chapter, is ultimately the measure even of dramatic qualities, and will therefore include as much reference to the points above mentioned as is necessary for the scope and purpose of this handbook.

## II. GROWTH OF HIS ART

Although it is true that Shakespeare was never a beginner, and that in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," for example, we have some of his very best work (IV. i. 116-121, or V. i. 12-17), yet the true perspective is gained when we contrast the plays as a whole, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," for instance, with "The Tempest"; and it is only by tracing this progress of his art that we can fully appreciate the wonder of his literary achievement.

Some of this dramatic progress was pointed out in the chapter containing a summary of the poet's writings; there the decades 1590-1600, and 1600-10 were mentioned as notable periods of contrast, for the plays of the second

period exhibit a sudden and complete change in subject and treatment. Now we add other, though not always distinct points of contrast presented by the two decades; in the first, comedy prevails; in the second, tragedy; in the first, a joyous humour is almost everywhere present; in the second, although humour prevails to an extent that is both surprising and admirable, it is a humour that most nearly approaches to pathos, or, if I may use this Greek word with a suggestive prefix, to *sympathy*.

And indeed the laughter that rings both loud and long through the years which precede 1600, ceases so abruptly that the effect is appalling; and what is more, it is never heard afterwards; even the comedies of the period that follows are tragic in their irony of mirth, and are certainly more depressing than the tragedies themselves. Nor in the later Romances—in spite of the drolleries of *Autolycus* and the like—shall we hear Shakespeare's happy-hearted laugh, as we heard it ten years before; and even his smile will have the serenity of sorrow conquered. I may also remark that after 1600 his enthusiasm for music seems to be suppressed.

Next, in the second decade, dramatic interest is centred mostly in character, while in the first it is supplied by plot, incident, dialogue, and the like; also, characterization in the second period is more profound, and, we may add, more terrible; and of course these plays exhibit generally both a dramatic and a literary advance on their predecessors of 1590-1600.

From this brief consideration of the two great periods into which the dramas of Shakespeare are clearly separable, we pass to a more detailed examination. First, from about 1590 to 1595 come the plays that are more or less tentative, imitative, experimental; their best representative is "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*," and some would include "*The Merchant of Venice*"; but this play I prefer to place with the comedies which culminate in "*Twelfth*

Night" (page 430); for it displays a sufficient advance in every department of the dramatic craft; among its new excellences are the character of Shylock, a skilfully contrived plot, loftiness of thought, a higher ideal of woman, a purer rhetoric, a finer vein of poetry, and an idyllic charm.

It will be noticed that this first group of experiments includes not only farce, history, comedy, tragedy, but also the poems, and some of the sonnets. From this time forth, with the exception of occasional songs and sonnets, Shakespeare seems to have disdained further contest in the arena of conventional verse; drama, as he wrote it, was more original, fuller of scope, capable of yet higher flights of poetry; his plays indeed are often more poetical than dramatic.

And now, after this first view of Shakespeare's early and tentative work, we shall find it most instructive as well as most convenient to trace the progress of his mind and art along the three lines of history, tragedy, and comedy.

### III. THE HISTORIES

We shall lose nothing by stating at the very outset that the ground plan of Shakespeare's historical dramas is patriotic almost as much as artistic; see, for example, the poet's reflections at the end of the three plays that conclude respectively three periods of anarchy, viz., "Richard III," "King John," and "Henry V."

Bound up with this is another which I may best call the didactic; "dramatic poesy," said Bacon, "is as history made visible . . . a kind of musician's bow, by which men's minds may be played upon"; and Nashe writes, "They (historical dramas) show the ill-success of treason, the wretched end of usurpers, the misery of evil dissension"; and that this purpose was set before Shakespeare may be seen in any careful comparison of his "Rich-

ard II" with Marlowe's "Edward II"; for while Marlowe keeps silence with respect to his moral, the ethical lesson of Shakespeare's play is proclaimed on every page of it; and the same is true of his other historical dramas.

Including "Henry VIII" we have ten plays to consider; the three parts of "Henry VI," "Richard III," "Richard II," "King John," the two parts of "Henry IV" "Henry V," and "Henry VIII." Let us first glance at the centuries of which these histories are such a living record. Aided by one or two other dramatists and writers, Shakespeare gives us the story of nearly 350 years, *i.e.*, from about 1200 to 1550; only the reign of "Henry III" is left unrepresented; for Bacon's prose fills up the gap of Henry VII,<sup>1</sup> and the reign of Edward IV (and Edward V, if this need be counted) is included partly in "Henry VI," and partly in "Richard III." As to the first three Edwards, Peele wrote a poor chronicle play of "Edward I"; Marlowe's "Edward II" has been mentioned already; and Shakespeare himself may have lent a hand (p. 373) to the anonymous drama of "Edward III." This completes the record of three and a half centuries, and the point, as we shall see later, is not without its importance.

Next, we will exclude from our survey the play of "Henry VIII," for although parts of it may have been written by Shakespeare at various periods, it is best regarded as one of his latest productions, written most probably to order, something of an experiment, and lastly, pieced together and completed by Fletcher. Thus we are left with nine plays, which we will first view in three groups of three each; we have the three chronicle plays of "Henry VI," three studies in kings and kingship,

<sup>1</sup> For the character of Henry VII, see "3 Henry VI," IV. vi. 70-76. Shakespeare also, as I think, intended to "make much of him" (l. 75) dramatically, but after his study of Henry V he may have deferred or cancelled his intent.



namely, the two "Richards" and "John," and the "trilogy," as it is sometimes called, of Shakespeare's ideal monarch, in other words, the two parts of "Henry IV," and the play of "Henry V."

But we may look at these three groups in another light; at first, let us say, the slightly dramatized chronicle could be relied on to fill the Elizabethan theatre; for in those days mere history was story to the mass of the people (and a good deal of story was added to the history); next, growing education, especially dramatic, soon called for characterization; hence the two "Richards," and "John"; thirdly, the one-character play, the play of paltry king and selfish courtier, must be supplemented by the drama of our complete human life, its comic side as well as its tragic; and therefore in the last three plays Falstaff appears as a monarch mightier even than Henry V. All this Shakespeare saw, and felt it within himself, and his genius rose splendidly to the occasion.

Our remaining note on this first aspect of Shakespeare's historical plays will be this; Richard III is a study in unscrupulous strength, Richard II in unscrupulous weakness; King John, not so easy to determine, represents unscrupulous misrule and villainy; while Henry IV is more clearly the poet's ideal of unscrupulous kingcraft; and of course Henry V is yet more clearly his ideal of the perfect king and the perfect Englishman.

But there is another aspect of these nine plays which calls for our closer attention. In Chapter VI., Section 7 (pp. 109, 110), I pointed to Shakespeare's own general introduction to his historical dramas, and I inferred that he had dramatized or taken a leading part in dramatizing the disastrous period occupied chiefly by the reigns of Henry VI and Richard III—"Divided York and Lancaster," as he calls it, and that his experiments had been favourably received. Thus encouraged, he next "pursued the story" of Henry V. It may seem a question why

Shakespeare should have begun with a later and less interesting period of history, viz., "1, 2, and 3 Henry VI," and "Richard III," and then have turned his attention to the earlier and more attractive, that is to say, the four plays, "Richard II," "1 and 2 Henry IV," and "Henry V," which comprise his epic of "that star of England"; but we may find one answer in the mere fact of the nearness of the former period, and another in the closely related fact that contemporary interest in the more recent events both demanded and was receiving literary and dramatic expression. Possibly also Shakespeare wished that his long story from our annals might have a triumphant close, and that an ideally perfect king should come last and point his moral.

One difficulty, however, presents itself when we take this wider view of the histories of Shakespeare, and arrange them in these two groups of four each; it is the play of "King John," which appears to stand quite by itself. But possibly "King John," though finished off so adroitly that it seems to close a disastrous epoch with a national triumph, was nevertheless originally intended to be the first play in a third historic cycle—the Plantagenet. Shakespeare had not long completed his first series, the Wars of the Roses, and had begun his second, which I have called the epic of Henry V, by writing "Richard II," in which play Prince Hal (though in reality a child of twelve) is already qualified to "unhorse the lustiest challenger"; and at this point, impelled by the patriotic feeling which I shall refer to again, Shakespeare turned aside from his projected first part of "Henry IV," while he recast a play, "The Troublesome Raigne of King John," which already contained the lines, "Let England live but true within itself, And all the world can never wrong her state," and concluded as follows: "If England's peers and people join in one, Nor pope, nor France, nor Spain, can do them wrong."

The play of "King John," therefore, I repeat, might have stood as the first of a great historic series which should have running through it the usual theme—the evils of misrule, usurpation, dissension—a series, moreover, that was to culminate in the victories of Edward III, as a later cycle was to adorn its ethics of politics with the conquests of Henry V.

From this project, however, Shakespeare might have been deterred by the fact that the first two Edwards, as noticed above, had already been dramatized, though again, he possibly had a share in the drama of "Edward III."

We now return to the patriotic fervour that ran higher in Shakespeare than in any of his contemporary dramatists, and it is doubtless the main motive of the play of "King John,"—far stronger than any Protestant motive which some would find in the play. This fervour seems to have reached its height when in 1596 Essex and Howard sacked Cadiz and destroyed a Spanish fleet. The expedition is, certainly, as I think, referred to by a passage in "King John";<sup>1</sup> similarly, in "Henry V," Shakespeare compares an incident of the play with the expedition of Essex to Ireland in 1598.

And further; the patriotic note which was struck as early as "Henry VI" ("3 Henry VI," IV. i. 43, 44, and IV. viii. 19, 20), which is at least echoed in "Richard III" (V. v. 38, 39), and is struck loud and long by the dying Gaunt in "Richard II" (II. i. 31-68), can be heard yet more clearly in "King John"; for not only is England at once the inspiration and the central figure of this latter drama, but also, as a fact, the famous speech of Gaunt is *reproduced* in fewer but statelier lines—"King John," II.

<sup>1</sup> See I. ii. 54-78. The Queen's ships were manned with "tyrones, and almost all voluntaries," wrote Essex to Bacon; so Shakespeare describes them. If 1596 seems late for the composition of "King John," it may be added that this passage has some appearance of being an interpolation.

i. 23-28, "That pale . . . her king."—This passage should be carefully compared with its forerunner in "Richard II"; evidently the two plays are inspired by the same genuine and irresistible ardour of patriotism; and yet with a difference; for in "Richard II" patriotism is incidental to the drama; Gaunt leaves the stage early; but his successor, Faulconbridge, plays a leading part throughout "King John." In fact, Shakespeare is determined to write a drama of which the hero shall be not a king, but the nation itself; the genius of a people, as apart from the caprice or the villainy of its rulers, a purpose which was at least suggested by the old play he worked upon: "Vouchsafe to welcome. . . . A warlike Christian, and your countryman." And this countryman (Faulconbridge) here introduced in the Prologue, speaks also the last speech of that earlier play, from which I have quoted above (p. 399).

The people of England, then, impersonated by Faulconbridge, are the character and the theme of this isolated drama of "King John," at least on its patriotic side. When later, as in "Henry V," Shakespeare thought fit to give renewed and final expression to this patriotic feeling, and again to ally it with contemporary incident—the expedition of Essex—he could identify the interests of the crown and the nation; and although a king was still the central figure on that later stage, he stood nevertheless among loyal subjects; and these not English alone, but Welsh also, and Scotch, and even Irish. *On no other occasion has Shakespeare brought the four nations together.* An earlier "Henry V," therefore, is "King John," a patriotic drama in which the poet has to write under opposite conditions, and to teach his lesson of unity from the book of misrule and disaster, as in "Henry V" he teaches it from his triumphant national epics.

At this point I may anticipate the objection that in the

foregoing brief summary I have assumed a chronological sequence of these historical plays; I will therefore bring forward as briefly the evidence of date on which I have relied.

We are all agreed that the three parts of "Henry VI" (p. 456, note) come first in order of time, and that "1 and 2 Henry IV" (1596-1597) and "Henry V" (1598) come last; we have therefore to locate only the three plays "Richard III," "Richard II," and "King John."

In 1903 Mr. Swinburne repeated his opinion of 1880 by pronouncing "Richard II" as "unmistakably the author's first attempt at historic drama." He relied for his opinion chiefly on the lyrical style of the play; but this, as it appears to me, was determined in great part by the leading character, though we discover the same style in several later plays, "Romeo and Juliet," for example, or "A Midsummer Night's Dream."<sup>1</sup> But in this particular instance the suggestion probably came from Marlowe's "Edward II"; "I must," says Gaveston, "have wanton poets, pleasant wits, Musicians that . . . May draw the pliant king which way I please"; the sentiment, moreover, is Greek; (ὁὐκοῦν ὅταν . . . ἐποιήσῃ, Plato, "Rep." III. 410 E.); and Shakespeare with this, or at least Marlowe before him, tells us that the ear of Richard "is stopped with other flattering sounds, Lascivious metres, to whose venom sound The open ear of youth doth always listen"; and thus he expressly announces something of the method and manner of his play, its wanton music, its false poetic, its effusive rhetoric. In fact, this crude experiment of making the mere speech betray the emotion or the man—or the woman, for the Queen adopts the unhappy subtilties and affectations of her husband—is carried to a destructive excess; for example, in II. ii. 98-122, where the poet intends that York's disorderly language

"King John," though much less lyrical than "Richard II," is more lyrical than "Richard III."

shall be the appropriate utterance of his disordered mind. Granting that the text can be relied on, and I think it may, we have as the result of the poet's intention a mutually destructive mixture of prose and blank verse. Tennyson made trial of the same device in the mad scene of his "Maud," but neither poet repeated his experiment; each was soon convinced that nothing can be gained by letting doubtful art in at one door while good art goes out at another. And it is amusing to notice that even in "Richard II" Shakespeare often forgets his experiments of metre and manner; as in V. i. 26-34, where the Queen, though her anxieties have increased tenfold, abandons her grotesque manner of speech, and gives utterance to the most natural, the most inspired, and of course the most effective poetry in the play.<sup>1</sup> Just for an unguarded moment the poet allowed art to drive out artifice.

But Mr. Swinburne further regards some parts of "Richard II" as "pre-Marlowite," and he detects the earlier influence of Greene. Here again I venture to express the opposite opinion; the style of "Richard III," the manner of the "deep tragedian," ("Richard III," III. v. 5), befits the "naked villany" (I. iii. 336) of the "plain devil" (I. ii. 236) of a tragedy written respectfully under the direct influence of Marlowe, who had recently been joint worker, as it seems, with Shakespeare in the third part of "Henry VI." Of that drama, moreover, "Richard III." is something more than a direct continuation; it is actually begun within the former play, for example, where Gloucester makes the announcement, "I'll blast his harvest," *sqq.* ("3 Henry VI," V. vii. 21-25; see also iv. 124-127, etc.); again, "Richard II" as naturally begins

<sup>1</sup> I do not overlook the famous speech of Gaunt in II. i. 31-68; but for its persistent confusion of metaphor (the *verve* is admirable) it might rank with the above. And let the reader compare those lines (V. i. 26-34) with their probable suggestion in Marlowe's "Edward II," and he will be aware of a gulf fixed between the genius of the two poets.

the "Henry V" cycle as "Richard III" concludes that of York and Lancaster.

I have already shown (p. 125), how in "Richard III" Shakespeare repeats the earlier Marlowe, and I pointed out that Gloucester is merely Tamburlaine and Barabas rolled into one character, and he often speaks their very speech; whereas the play of "Richard II," though perhaps suggested by later work of Marlowe, seems to avoid any direct imitation of that writer; indeed, except for their main motive, Marlowe's "Edward II" and Shakespeare's "Richard II" have little in common, and every reader must be surprised that Shakespeare should be so slightly indebted to his original.

Next, in "Richard II," Marlowe is supplanted certainly by Greene, perhaps also by Peele, Lyly, and Sidney; in spite of the poet's caution, their influence is often distinctly felt. And we may say finally that "Richard II" is the natural reaction from "Richard III," from plain blank verse and a plain—far too plain—villain, to over-subtle melodies<sup>1</sup> and a character so over-subtilized that he becomes a caricature.

At this point we make a reservation; the chief chronological fact to be established is that "King John" is maturer and later work than the two "Richards"; these, it might be, were contemporaneous; Shakespeare generally had two or three plays in hand at the same time; but it is not so likely that "King John" (see also below) was begun before the other two plays were finished. And lastly, for dates, let us conjecture, "Richard III," 1593,

<sup>1</sup> Two lines seem to have dropped out from one of these melodies, viz., after (III. ii. 198):

I play the torturer by small and small,  
To lengthen out the worst that must be spoken;

perhaps we may supply something like this:

Rather with one swift stroke let sorrow fall;  
The grief is short for ill news shortly broken.

"Richard II," 1594, "King John," 1596. As to the trilogy "Henry IV," 1 and 2, and "Henry V," apart from other evidence, the mere style removes them to a later date from the other histories than the separating years might seem to warrant. Briefly, in the earlier plays, all the characters speak the lyric language of Shakespeare the beginner; in the later, and whether in verse or prose, they speak the language of life. We may further take into account the important humorous element that enters with Faulconbridge, culminates with Falstaff, and goes out with Fluellen.

The chronological data already obtained will be strengthened as we trace more exactly the artistic development of these historical plays along the line of characterization. We pass lightly over the three parts of "Henry VI," where the dominant dramatic interest centres in incident, and we come to the one-character play of "Richard III." Now, a play of one personage, surrounded by puppets, is easier to write, and often marks the beginner; for in drama of the highest type, all the characters are equally *dramatic*, and the action of each on the others is constant, and is directed to subserve the dramatic issues. And in "Richard II," although the poet's chief art is exercised on the central figure, we may take into account Bolingbroke and York, and perhaps also the Queen. In "King John" we find a clearer example of multiple characterization, for besides the King, and Arthur, and Constance, we have Faulconbridge, who stands to his predecessors in the relation I have indicated between the language of the later and the earlier histories; the relation, namely, of art to artifice; he is the first character drawn from the life.

Another aspect of "Richard III" which clearly marks the beginner has been noticed on page 128, where I point out that we have in Gloucester not only Tamburlaine and Barabas, but also the villain of an earlier stage who gratuitously proclaims his "naked villainy"; such charac-



ters are easy to draw, and easy to act; but apart from Aristotle's objections (page 422), they are essentially undramatic, being incapable of idealization. "Richard II," on the other hand, as we also noticed, displays the extreme of reaction, being highly complex, if not over-idealized.

A few general remarks on the remaining characters will close this division of my subject. We have seen in the play of "Richard II" a faint outline of "Henry V," and the first foil thereto in the figure of Aumerle; but the presence of the ideal monarch pervades these plays; it is felt even in "Henry VI," as for example in Part II, IV. ii. 166-169. Further, he is admirable as being the ideal man of Shakespeare's earlier period, no less than Prospero is of the latter; between them—we may except Brutus—come the colossal tragic figures who are easier to paint and less admirable when, as is not seldom the case, they gain their greatness at the expense of goodness. Of Hotspur and Falstaff, the later foils to Prince Hal, enough has been said, though I may repeat that Falstaff fully develops the humorous element which also marks the progress of the poet's art. Enough also was said of Henry IV, where I regarded him as the embodiment of unscrupulous kingcraft. The minor characters will not detain us; and with the exception of that "Queen of Tragedy," Margaret, the women of these dramas count for little; Constance and Arthur, however—though again in defiance of Aristotle—are admirable as the perfect flowers of pathos; like Romeo and Juliet they are star-crossed in their piteous overthrows. ("Romeo and Juliet," Prol. 6. See also p. 424.)

But the historical plays of Shakespeare are related not alone by motive and characterization; they must also be estimated by their dramatic species; and this will be examined in connection with the tragedies, to which we now proceed.

But first let me add that the dramatic and other merits of these nine historical plays are best discovered by reading them in the order I have suggested as chronological; with the exception of 1 and 2 "Henry IV," and "Henry V," they are not, perhaps, among the masterpieces of Shakespeare, but should rather be classed as tentative work, patriotic and moral essays, humours of dramatic experiment; yet, taken altogether, and with the Shakespearean portions of "Henry VIII," they give ample testimony to the genius of their author; and they possess some historical as well as artistic and ethical importance.

#### IV. THE TRAGEDIES

Returning for a moment to the former section, and recalling Richard II's "sad stories of the death of kings" (III. ii. 160), we may expect to class some two thirds of Shakespeare's Histories with the Tragedies; and this, as it happens, is near to the truth; and further, they illustrate every variety of tragic interest.

Or again, with the exception of "Henry V," the story of Shakespeare's Historical Plays is the story of "The right divine of kings to govern wrong," and to their own lips these kings invariably commend the ingredients of their poisoned chalice. But, "*quidquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi*"-- here then is another tragic motive, or a second moral which runs through all these patriotic and admonitory dramas, namely, that misgovernment is yet more disastrous to the ruled than it is to the despicable or despotic ruler.

And now let us examine more strictly the title of these plays to rank as tragedies. As is well known, they occupy a place by themselves in the Folio of 1623, between the Comedies and the Tragedies; but this distinction may have been a matter of convenience rather than principle. As to this principle, it involves a question of the ideal;

"Hamlet" is founded on romance, but "Richard II" on history; and though Richard III and Macbeth were both historic personages, and were presented to Shakespeare by the same historian, Macbeth stood nearer to the legendary horizon of the historic record. Still, we must remember what I stated above, that in Shakespeare's day history was story to the mass of the people; and as a fact, even the Wars of the Roses served an Elizabethan dramatist with material only less ideal than was "the Tale of Thebes or Pelops' line" to the Greek dramatists.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore it is that among Shakespeare's early tragedies, which I will now enumerate, we find so many dramas of the variety that he himself styles "tragical-historical." Much the same may be said of the Roman Plays that are met with in his second tragic period.

According to the Folio, the tragedies of Shakespeare are eleven in number; they include "Cymbeline," which appears as "The Tragedie of Cymbeline," whereas "Timon of Athens" is not called a tragedy; again, "Richard III" is called a tragedy. As to "Troilus and Cressida," this play is styled sometimes "The Tragedie of Troylus and Cressida," but more often merely "Troilus and Cressida"; and we judge (chiefly from the paging) that the editors of the Folio first intended to place it among the tragedies after "Romeo and Juliet" (a space not fully occupied by "Timon of Athens,") but that being uncertain of its dramatic species they ultimately placed it in the gap between the Histories and the Tragedies; and possibly for the same reason they did not mention it in the "Catalogue." It has no claim (p. 430), to rank with the Tragedies, though its catastrophe, *the death of Love*, is even more tragic than the death of lovers.

Therefore, we shall not include "Troilus and Cressida" among the tragedies to be considered, but we shall add

<sup>1</sup> See also next footnote.

some of the Histories; also the Roman plays. Thus we shall have two series of tragedies, one running through the years 1590-95, the other through 1600-9. To the first period belong "Henry VI," "Titus Andronicus," "Richard III," "Romeo and Juliet," "Richard II," and "King John"; but "Henry VI" we have characterized already as dramatized history rather than actual drama;<sup>1</sup> it is tragic chiefly as regards incident; and of "King John", I remarked in my review of the play, "it is an inorganic drama which exhibits some remarkable tragic characters." Thus there remain four plays of the early period that may be regarded as tragedies, "Titus Andronicus," "Richard III," "Richard II," and "Romeo and Juliet." Those of the later period are "Hamlet," "Othello," "King Lear," "Macbeth," "Timon of Athens," and the three Roman Plays, "Julius Caesar," "Antony and Cleopatra," "Coriolanus." This completes the list. We might however make a note on "The Merchant of Venice," which just missed being a tragedy, with Antonio for protagonist; but the poet may have been diverted from such a purpose, first by the greater tragic possibilities in the character of Shylock (who fought his doom and died morally if not physically),<sup>2</sup> and next by the still greater

<sup>1</sup> It is not always possible to draw definitely the border-line between the real and the ideal, between history, and romance or drama; and as to the question whether history is a fit subject for ideal treatment, we may say generally that the idealist is often hampered by the historic fact; there will be a tendency to distort incident and overdraw character. Thus a great painter usually avoids the mere portrait, which gives small—or dangerous—scope for idealization. On the other hand, if successful, the literary artist will add detail, colour, and (chiefly through dialogue) life itself to the historic sketch. With respect to Shakespeare's treatment of the historical record, I regard "Henry V" and "Antony and Cleopatra" as the best examples; but although his other historical plays are open to criticism, we must be surprised at his superiority over every other imaginative writer in this kind; Kingsley and George Eliot are no mean artists, yet "Hypatia" is romance spoilt by history, and "Romola" is history spoilt by romance.

<sup>2</sup> Though the dramatist would have been hampered by his double task of making Shylock a monster of iniquity yet a victim of injustice.

romantic possibilities in the character of Poltū. Thus we are left with a species of drama which again is best described, in Shakespeare's own words as "tragi-comical."<sup>1</sup>

At this point we must briefly consider the nature of tragedy in drama; and as the structure of the *Matterhorn* is revealed not so much by chemical analysis as by the geologic records, so the interpretation of "*King Lear*" is arrived at chiefly through a study of dramatic evolution, and with that—I will say it thus early—the evolution of morals; for (p. 308) the one thing valid in this mystery of Humanity is ethical progress; here alone is the true perspective of life, and, as we shall see later, of art.

If therefore we find that the ethical impulse towards the ideal, which is the mark of all great artists, was strong in *Æschylus* and *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, we must expect to find it strong in Shakespeare; if we learn that they "moralized the lawless and uncertain thoughts" of the ages behind them, so we must believe that Shakespeare advanced the moral standard of his own day; and finally, if we admit, as we must, that they wavered between the old belief in malignant Fate, and the new hope or trust in beneficent Providence, so we must expect that Shakespeare, if he also wavers, will end by throwing his higher morality—a bequest of some two thousand years—into the scale of Providence. And this he does (page 309), even in "*King Lear*," where the balance is most nearly equal.

It is only by looking back that we can see the road we have travelled, and learn how much the two thousand years which lay between *Æschylus* and Shakespeare could give the later poet; indeed their conquests are innumerable, and most of them date from that early time when the doubtful gleams of Stoic morality were absorbed in the

<sup>1</sup> "*Hamlet*," II. ii. 415-421. The poet's banter here and in the context includes a good deal of truth.

burning and shining light of the Lord's Prayer. But Christ did more; *he transferred morals from philosophy to life*. Thus it is that the ages succeeding gave to Shakespeare concrete examples as well as truer conceptions; they gave him living doctrines of right and wrong, of sin and retribution, of moral responsibility, of human brotherhood, of respect for woman; of goodness, forgiveness, love; of belief in God and hope of immortality; these and many more than these which were denied to Æschylus, came to Shakespeare by mere right of later birth.

One other preliminary consideration; while we freely grant the principle that the true artist will not only maintain but also advance the ethical standard of his day (he must if he merely reflects its best life, but still more if he idealizes that life)—we have yet to ask, was Shakespeare a true artist? and again, may there not have been times when pessimism or other forms of retrogression stultified even his soul? If we had to judge him from one play, we might return a doubtful answer; but (p. 391) if we survey his work in the evolution of its vast comprehensiveness, we answer without hesitation that no poet saw life so widely as he, none so steadily, none so clearly, none to such consistent and glorious purpose; "depth in philosophy," says Bacon—and it is a wonderful saying—"bringeth men's minds about to religion."

From these high principles we now descend to examine some of the elements of tragedy; and in spite of the difficulties of the subject I think we may best discover them in the elements of life itself; for, as we have seen, good dramatic tragedy, however elaborate, can never contain more than life, or life sanely idealized.

We often speak of the battle of life; life indeed resolves itself into a struggle between good and evil. This conflict is twofold; it is carried on within the individual; it is waged between him and his surroundings. On the whole, good has proved the stronger of the combatants; and we

welcome the destruction of evil, even though it may involve a sacrifice of good.

Thus we have ready to our hand the following definitions: "Comedy is bloodless conflict between good and evil, ending in the triumph of good; while tragedy is the same conflict involving sacrifice of good, but also punishment of evil."

For again, the artist does not merely copy life; he idealizes; his outlook is wide, his onlook is far; he must allow evil, but, assisting progressive morality, he must not allow evil to triumph. So Shakespeare *never* allows it; and this is what we call poetic justice. And yet again, as self-sacrifice even unto death is the ideal of ethics—(we even speak of a soldier's death as "glorious")—so the ideal of this ideal is what we shall expect to find in *modern* tragedy; and we do find it, and abundantly, in Shakespeare; and the best example is the death of Cordelia. And how this is to be regarded as poetic justice, I have pointed out in my review of "King Lear."

Further, the dramatist will avoid or interpret mere accidents; he will deal mostly with great personages;<sup>1</sup> he will suspend many of the disturbing influences of ordinary life that prevent us from watching the operation of the great law of moral progress; and he will add other influences—those of the supernatural, for example—which aid us in our discernment of that law.

Yet another preliminary note; in reading Shakespeare, are we to purge our minds of their everyday legal and moral notions—for such is the opinion of some critics, and in spite of the elementary fact that, thus purged, they

<sup>1</sup> But we must remember that the ideal will vary; Aristotle's view of tragic perfection (p. 415) may not be ours; and we may find ourselves reflecting that counts or kings no longer monopolize human nobility; that goodness may be as heroic as greatness; that the self-sacrifice of a peasant may be finer tragedy than the world-destroying ambition of a prince. The self-denying pathos of Enoch Arden is not a less powerful tragic motive than the utterly selfish passion of Macbeth.

are not minds at all; as indeed these critics would assure us if Shakespeare presented such a character on the stage? But although I am compelled thus early to call attention to this vital point, it will be examined later; and meanwhile, I may notice the inadequacy of Aristotle's tragic purification by pity and fear;<sup>1</sup> too much has been made of this; it is no longer true; it falls short indeed of the high idea of the Attic dramatists themselves. If to detach religion from morality is difficult, to detach morality from art—as I have shown in my "Handbook to Tennyson"<sup>2</sup>—is impossible; we can, of course, deny the existence of morality, but that is another matter. And here I will quote the admirable words of Bacon, nor is it likely that the whole history of the human race will make any advance upon them: "To morality we owe mediocrity, to religion, perfection."

I am by no means overstating the importance of these moral considerations; as will be seen further on, they are the chief factor in the problem of Shakespearean tragedy, yet a factor that is mostly ignored. And if even now I have not proved it impossible that any of us can approach the tragedies of Shakespeare unattended by our fundamental notions of right and wrong, I will again refer to a later page, and merely add that the purely aesthetic attitude of mind—if there can be any such—would be confronted with innumerable cases of *reductio ad absurdum*, as when it found itself compelled to explain the death of Cordelia and the death of Macbeth by the same tragic principle.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ἡ δὲ ἄλγος καὶ φόβος παραινοῦσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. — *Poet.* 1449, b. 27. But Aristotle's doctrine is fallacious; he admits a moral resultant (κάθαρσις—in whatever sense of the word), to what he intends as merely aesthetic agencies; and teaching that has a moral resultant is presumably moral. In fact, he writes to confute Plato, and therefore strains the point. We shall find the same fallacy underlying his yet more subtle and more important exposition of tragedy cited below (pp. 414, 415).

<sup>2</sup> Pages 33-43.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 421, and Dr. Bradley's "Shakespearean Tragedy," p. 324.



That Shakespeare did not so explain it, I have partly shown in my sixth Chapter (*e.g.*, p. 321); and after all, his point of view is at least as important as our own. But to understand his dealings with tragedy, we must return to some earlier doctrine of the subject. "

To begin with, we may notice that, whether intentionally or otherwise, Shakespeare has reproduced many of the motives of Greek tragedy; the following are two or three examples from a very large number of such: "The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men To excuse their after-wrath" ("Antony and Cleopatra," V. ii. 289-290); "Pride, Which out of daily fortune ever taints The happy man; whether defect of judgment" ("Coriolanus," IV. vii. 37-42); "O'ergrowth of some complexion . . . the stamp of one defect," which corrupts the whole ("Hamlet," I. iv. 27-36).

These passages, especially from "Coriolanus" and "Hamlet" with their ἵβρις, their excess or defect of some passion, their character at variance with circumstance, their frailty of human error, and the like, take us back to Aristotle, whose theories of tragedy, based partly on the Greek tragic poets, and partly on his own ethical philosophy, must find a place even in the briefest examination of the subject. However, I shall begin by stating that tragedy, in its broadest sense, implies a change from prosperity to adversity, due to (1) *misfortune*, (2) *fault*, or (3) *crime*; and this broader sense will serve us better than we imagine as the ground-work of our remarks on tragedy in drama. But at this point we submit to the guidance of Aristotle, especially in his "Poetic," and postulate that the tragic character must be great (but see footnote, p. 412); adding partly for ourselves, and in respect of the ideal, that the sufferer from misfortune must be eminently virtuous, like Cordelia, that the sufferer through some error of human frailty should be otherwise noble, like Hamlet, and that the criminal should at least be royal, like Macbeth.

We cannot, however, follow the lead of Aristotle so closely when we examine the first and third of these divisions of tragedy, though we must borrow largely—as Shakespeare seems to have done—from his theory of the second—the *faulx* division, which we will consider first. This is Aristotle's well-known *ἀμαρτία*, which occurs in the following passage from his "Poetic":

"Neither should the eminently virtuous man be represented as falling from prosperity to adversity, for this is not a matter of fear or pity, but revolting (*μαρόν*). . . . Nor again should the fall of the wicked man from prosperity to adversity be exhibited; for although such a tragic motive may be gratifying to our moral sense (*φιλόθροπον*), it excites neither pity nor terror, inasmuch as our pity is aroused by misfortune undeservedly suffered, and our terror by some resemblance between the sufferer and ourselves; neither of these effects, therefore, is produced by such an incident. (See "King Lear," V. iii. 231-2.)

There remains, then, a choice between these extremes, a character, that is to say, neither eminently virtuous or just, nor yet involved in misfortune through deliberate vice or villainy, but through some error of human frailty (*ἀμαρτίαν τυτή*); and this personage should be of high fame and fortune. . . ."

Now, the passages quoted above from "Hamlet" and "Coriolanus," together with their context (ll. 23-38, and 35-55) might of themselves seem to prove that Shakespeare had deeply pondered and questioned the Greek philosopher; the passages are curiously excrescent;<sup>1</sup> they occur, moreover, in the plays that most nearly conform to the main doctrine of Aristotle; and further, these plays are at the beginning and the end of the great series of tragedies.<sup>2</sup> We may fairly suppose that Shakespeare tried

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to trace them to any other authority.

<sup>2</sup> "Julius Caesar," which may have preceded "Hamlet," is of the same tragic kind, and contains many references to the above theory of Aristotle.

Aristotle's theory, then varied it, and then returned to it;<sup>1</sup> for all these tragedies are modelled more or less exactly on this method of Aristotle. Those, however, of the earlier period, with the possible exception of "Richard II," are less suggestive of the Greek theorist's leading principle, and they mostly recall Seneca. Further, as to this passage from the "Poetic," how admirably, for example—with the aid possibly of the "Ethics"—has Shakespeare rendered Aristotle's *ἀμάρτια* in the "Hamlet" passage: "Some vicious mole of nature in them (a figure suggested probably in the 'Ethics'), As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty. . . . Being nature's livery or fortune's star" (where "fortune's star" is most likely a gloss upon the former phrase; see pp. 436, 437). Of Shakespeare's debt to Aristotle in all matters relating to art I have spoken elsewhere (p. 43); I do not think he was familiar with Greek verse, but I am confident that he had a fair knowledge of Greek prose—quite enough to justify the condescending testimony of Jonson; nor do I think it necessary to take refuge in the assumption that the leading dramatist of a great dramatic era, the associate of Marlowe and Jonson, could not possibly remain ignorant of the principles of his art; apart from any such possibility or probability, I believe that he pondered independently these doctrines of Aristotle, and questioned them indeed not only because they were sometimes on the verge of subtlety and casuistry, but also because the most valid of them required considerable modification after the two thousand years of ethical progress to which I have already referred. Yet all that is sound in them he carefully retains; briefly indeed, yet most aptly, we may define the tragic art of Shakespeare as Aristotle *plus* twenty centuries of moral advancement.

<sup>1</sup> In "Coriolanus," IV. vii. 35-55, Shakespeare seems to have remembered his digression in "Hamlet," and apparently he attempted to vary it, and enlarge upon it, but at the expense of clearness.

This leads us to a closer examination of Aristotle's exposition of tragedy; and we notice at once that the distinction between error and crime is not so easy to draw in our day. This point is well illustrated in Shakespeare's Richard II, who plays the double part of Hamlet and Hamlet's uncle, being at one and the same time the victim of *ἀμαρτία* (excess of the reflective faculty) and a deliberate criminal.

Next, we examine this *ἀμαρτία* principle, this frailty of human error, or error of human frailty, which supplies the unifying element in most of the tragedies of Shakespeare (and is present in not a few of the comedies). It consists in the poet's exposition of a character in some respects great, which fails nevertheless to fulfil the conditions of righteous or successful existence; and this chiefly because it is placed among circumstances wherein, as I explained on a former page, the moral law operates with ideal precision, and so makes the *ἀμαρτία* prominent and fatal. Foremost among such characters in Shakespeare are Hamlet, Brutus, Caesar, and Coriolanus; next may come King Lear, Antony, and Timon; the flaw in the character of Othello is not so easy to detect when we have regard to the *super*-subtlety of Iago; Richard II may be excluded; he has little or no claim on our admiration, our respect, or even our compassion; he is, let us say, Shakespeare's first experiment in this kind of drama; and of the two emotions, pity and fear, which according to Aristotle are aroused in us by the *ἀμαρτία* species of tragedy, it is fear that possesses us most—or shall we say with Swinburne "loathing and abhorrence"—as we watch this doubtful character working out his own doom. He really belongs to the third, the *criminal* division of tragedy, that of Richard III, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and others; this we shall consider later.

I must now return to the purifying emotions of Aristotle, "pity and fear," which are often retained without

modification in modern discussions of tragedy; we must repeat that they are inadequate; they would exclude moral considerations. Aristotle's attempt is subtle, and it might pass current in ancient Greece; here, in England, and in our day, we must use language that was impossible to Aristotle, such as this of Dr. Bradley:<sup>1</sup> "Macbeth leaves on most readers a profound impression of the misery of a guilty conscience, and the retribution of crime." . . . "The soul he (Shakespeare) seems to feel, is a thing of such inconceivable depth, complexity and delicacy, that when you introduce into it, or suffer to develop in it, any change, and particularly the change called evil, you can form only the vaguest idea of the reaction you will provoke." This reaction Dr. Bradley elsewhere calls "spiritual death." Coriolanus, however, "saved his soul," which, the same writer assures us, "is the only real thing in the world." And again he says, "Banquo has obviously at first a quiet conscience, and uses with evident sincerity the language of religion." In other words, such characters warn us that we must be steadfast in well-doing; that goodness has no medium; that a quiet conscience has some connection with religion; and that we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. And this warning is moral.

But we follow the lead of Aristotle even less closely when we proceed to examine the first and third of our divisions of tragedy, those namely of *misfortune* and *crime*. As to the first, the spectacle of a righteous man overtaken by calamity and misery is rejected by Aristotle as "revolting" (*μυαρόν*),—shocking to our sense of moral justice, and so forth; and the same great thinker assures us elsewhere that while history records the facts of life, imaginative literature is bound to idealize and to interpret; and that the poetic justice implied in the ideal will not allow the good to be sacrificed.

<sup>1</sup> For the book and its other tendencies, see pp. 419-429.

But we have seen already (pp. 308-310) that the opposite is now the fact, and I will here quote one authority from among hundreds; Sir Walter Scott, for example, tells us that "a character of a highly virtuous and lofty stamp is degraded rather than exalted by an attempt to reward virtue with temporal prosperity; such is not the recompense which Providence has deemed worthy of suffering merit, and it is a dangerous and fatal doctrine to teach . . . readers of romance, that rectitude of conduct and principle are either naturally allied with or rewarded by . . . attainment."

It appears, therefore, that in process of time our ideas of poetic justice will be modified, and may even be reversed,<sup>1</sup> and that the ideal of one age may be replaced by something far higher in another age; and this seems to be the opinion of Shakespeare (see also footnote 1, p. 412) for he says of Cordelia that she "*Redeems nature from the general curse Which twain (i.e. Goneril and Regan) have brought her to*" (*King Lear*, IV. vi. 210, 211); and thus he expresses the vitiating and the restoring of harmonies (as described in my "Handbook to Tennyson," see footnote 2, p. 413), and gives us indeed the most exact definition of progressive morality that has ever been framed; but, further, he adds (V. iii. 20, 21), "Upon such sacrifices . . . The gods themselves throw incense"; and thus the same poet also sets before us the highest known ideal towards which progressive morality is striving. Of course, these are also the words of Christ—"He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it."

I am aware that this "pre-occupation with matters outside the mood of aesthetic delight"<sup>2</sup> is generally condemned by writers on tragedy; it is by the latest authority, Dr. Bradley, who tells us, "The question regarding the tragic world and the ultimate power in it must not be

<sup>1</sup> "Handbook to Tennyson," pp. 37-39.

<sup>2</sup> Wyndham, "The Poems of Shakespeare," p. xiv.

answered in 'religious' language."<sup>1</sup> Again, he says (p. 33), "This (appeal to faith) is a point of view which emerges only when, in reading a play, we slip, by our own fault or the dramatist's, from the tragic position; or when, in thinking about the play afterwards, we fall back on *our everyday legal and moral notions*. The use of such language . . . is, to say the least, full of danger."

The question, as was noticed on p. 413, is of vital importance, and must be answered before we can proceed with our inquiry. To what has been anticipated on the page referred to, I may add one or two illustrations of what I am bound to regard as a deadly fallacy. "Tragedy assumes that the world, as it is presented, is the truth" ("Shakespearean Tragedy," p. 325). To this remark we raise no objection, though it might have been added, "yet the poet will idealize that world"; but the point is irrelevant to our argument. Next, the writer assumes that into this world, this problem of tragedy, the factor morality ("our everyday legal and moral notions") does not enter. Again, we have no objection to the assumption, because we are aware that as soon as the dramatist—especially the modern dramatist—gets to work upon his problem the factor *will force itself in*, because it is a factor, and the most important factor, of life; but this again is irrelevant. What we have to maintain is merely this, that when the factor has forced itself in and explained the problem, we have no right to reject that factor, or to assert that the problem was solved without it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Shakespearean Tragedy," p. 25. Yet compare with the former paragraph (ending "find it") Dr. Bradley's "religious" remarks quoted on p. 418; also the following: "is rather set free from life than deprived of it" (p. 324). Cf. also "heavenly good," "the blessed in spirit," etc., p. 327, and similar expressions *passim*. Worth noting is the admission, "biblical ideas seem to have been floating in Shakespeare's mind." See also next footnote.

<sup>2</sup> This gathering of the fig while calling the tree a thistle (see also former note and quotations, p. 418) is apparent on almost every page of Dr. Bradley's volume, and seriously impairs an otherwise valuable work. The following are

Next, with reference to my remark on a former page (413), that if the "strictly aesthetic" view of tragedy is adopted, we are compelled to explain the death of Cordelia and the death of Macbeth by the same tragic principle, I will again give an illustration from the most recent writer on the subject. Dr. Bradley tells us that "all things in the world are vanity except love"; therefore Macbeth, who was utterly without love,<sup>1</sup> and whose *selfish* ambition destroyed himself and others, was "vanity." But again, on another page, Dr. Bradley assures us that such tragic characters are "nearer to the heart of things than the smaller, more circumspect, and perhaps even 'better' beings."<sup>2</sup>

Yet again, as the question is of such infinite importance, involving as it does the reputation of morality and of Shakespeare, I will give one other illustration, and this time I will descend to formal logic. When we read or write a tragedy, we must, says the same writer, rid ourselves of "our everyday legal and moral notions": at the end of the tragedy we may return to them, or they may emerge from it. But the same authority tells us (and rightly) that if Iago had rid himself of these every-

additional examples of this logical suicide—of "King Lear" (a) it does not contain "a revelation of righteous omnipotence, or heavenly harmony"; (b) "its final . . . result is one in which pity and terror are so blended with a sense of law and beauty"; again (a) it does not contain "a promise of the reconciliation of mystery and justice," (b) "the business of the 'gods' with him was . . . to lead him to attain through apparently hopeless failure, the very end and aim of life"; or thus (a) "the world of Shakespeare's tragedies is equally destroyed by the ideas of righteous or unrighteous omnipotence"; (b) it is an inexorable order working in the passions and actions of men, and labouring through their agony and waste towards good." Or, to quote the thistle and the fig in one sentence, where the distinction—as was inevitable—is altogether refined away, "There holds in it the law, not of proportionate requital but of strict connection between act and consequence."

<sup>1</sup> "His love for her was probably never unselfish." ("Shakespearean Tragedy," p. 364.)

<sup>2</sup> We may now understand how it comes about that with a totally different premiss Dr. Bradley so often arrives at my conclusions. A striking example may be found in my review of "King Lear." See also Preface.



day legal and moral notions, he would have been non-human, "monstrous," abnormal. If, therefore, we accept Dr. Bradley's doctrine of tragedy, it follows that we who read a tragic drama are abnormal, and that Shakespeare who writes one is abnormal.

This is really the fallacy of "Art for art's sake," "Poetry for poetry's sake," and, I may add, "eating for eating's sake," which I exposed in my "Handbook to Tennyson," ten years ago; possibly it will require exposing in another ten years' time; indeed, this war between progression and retrogression may linger on till "verrà la morte, e finiremo il chiasso." Meanwhile I may point out that the fallacy must follow naturally on any attempt to ignore the increasing purpose of the ages, to resume the pagan standpoint of Aristotle, and to detach morality from tragedy, that is, from life also.

But there is one other point which has a most important bearing on Shakespeare as a tragic dramatist; we admit, that art, and the influence of art, must be moral, but—must the artist be moral? Yes—the literary artist, the artist in verse—verse of great scheme and scope—the epic, the dramatic; at least we shall know him if he is not moral; for poetry, such is its marvellous *personality* (see p. 4) must reveal the soul of the poet. As to the sculptor, painter, musician, he expresses himself through a medium that is no integral part of his mental and moral being; and therefore he may detach himself to an extent that is almost indefinite.

Less difficult is the problem that arises out of the third kind of tragedy and its rejection by Aristotle, the tragedy of the criminal, of Richard III and Macbeth, of "naked villainy" as Shakespeare so aptly describes it. Let us survey the ground of Aristotle's objection, which is ably defended in his "Rhetoric"; there is not sufficient resemblance, he tells us, between such criminals and ourselves.

Of course the character sketched by the dramatist may be unduly exaggerated (or purposely, as in the case of Caliban<sup>1</sup>) till it becomes a caricature, and then the objection is valid; otherwise it is based on a double fallacy. First, I repeat, in view of our advanced morality, it has become impossible to draw, except in very general terms, the line of demarcation between normal fault and abnormal crime—take, for instance, the case of Antony and Cleopatra; next, and allied to this, Aristotle fails by reason of his over-subtlety in distinguishing between artistic and moral effect; if I rightly interpret his *φιλάνθρωπον* (p. 415), he admits the moral effect of poetic justice being dealt out to a criminal, and on that very ground of morality excludes the effect from his tragic motives; again, he could not see, as we do, that all aesthetic influence is ultimately moral.

And now we are in a position to understand the modifications of Aristotle's theory which Shakespeare from his new moral standpoint was authorized to make; the tragic scheme is enlarged till it includes Cordelia and Macbeth, and the various tragic figures that stand somewhere between these two extremes. Thus we are able to classify his tragedies while at the same time we watch their development; and my concluding space will be occupied with a few illustrations of the foregoing principles.

Of "Titus Andronicus" (which bears witness to the early influence of Seneca), we need only remark that Shakespeare has scarcely as yet struck out his tragic path; he follows, rather than leads. However, though crude in almost every particular, "Titus Andronicus" nevertheless anticipates enough of the incidents and thoughts of later plays to testify, if not to Shakespeare's sole authorship, at least to his close relationship with this

<sup>1</sup> So Ariel is the artist who has got rid of his "every-day legal and moral notions"; we prefer human beings, as did Shakespeare. "Shall not myself, One of their kind . . . be kindlier moved?" ("The Tempest," V. i. 22-24.)

early drama. Of "Romeo and Juliet," however, more must be said; for critics are accustomed to class it with the *ἀμαρτία* group of tragedies; Romeo, they say, exhibits excess of impulse.<sup>1</sup> But I do not think this was Shakespeare's intention; I prefer his own account; Romeo and Juliet were "a pair of star-cross'd lovers" who met with "piteous overthrows"; and while we recognize an aesthetic effect of pathos, let us bow reverently before one of those "mysteries which heaven Will not have earth to know" (Coriolanus, IV. ii. 35). Or let us say that on the sacrifice of these lovers the gods themselves threw incense, and the plague on both their houses was stayed. "Romeo and Juliet" belongs therefore to the first and not the second class of tragic motives (p. 414).

"Richard III" stands at the other, the crime limit of the tragic scale, and is therefore also removed from the central *ἀμαρτία* type; but of this play enough has been said in the sixth Chapter. "Richard II," however, though we have already discussed (p. 417) its tragic species, may detain us a moment; for the pronounced antithesis of its protagonist and antagonist, while it marks the beginner, is nevertheless striking. The play is a veritable see-saw; the downfall of Richard corresponds at every stage to the uprise of Bolingbroke, so that at the end of the tragedy (we have something like it in "Macbeth") the position of the two opposing characters is reversed. The poet himself supplies a figure for this double motive; his drama, let us say, is "like a deep well That owes two buckets, filling one another." Every stage then of this downfall and uprise, every gradation of gloom and glow "from Richard's night to Bolingbroke's fair day," is clearly marked; and sometimes by the mere poetic phrase, as well as by situations; (*e.g.*, where IV. i. 221 repeats I. i. 20.)

As to "King John," we have already touched upon its

<sup>1</sup> Besides, from one point of view (p. 319) it is the tragedy of "Romeo and Juliet," and if Romeo is subject to *ἀμαρτία*, so should Juliet be.

want of tragic structure, though we also pointed to its advance upon the two "Richards," especially in some important elements of characterization. And lastly, in "Henry IV," the tragic element is subordinate to the heroic, and in "Henry V" it dies out altogether.

We now approach the wonderful group of tragedies of the second period, 1600-1607; they illustrate, in a remarkable way, the growth of Shakespeare's mind and art. The very earliest of them, "Julius Caesar," is an enormous advance on his previous tragic efforts, and we may fairly suppose that, during the interval, he had pondered, if he had not practised, the methods of Aristotle. To this, as I have partly suggested, his reflections in "Hamlet" on drama and dramatic principles, might seem to testify. I have also pointed to the close relation between "Julius Caesar" and "Hamlet"; the motive indeed of the latter is merely an expansion of the reflection of Brutus—"Between the acting of a dreadful thing And the first motion, all the interim is Like a phantasma or a hideous dream." And with regard to the technique of "Julius Caesar," I have remarked that from one point of view it appears as a double tragedy (indeed, it was thus reconstructed by the Duke of Buckingham), where Brutus, the antagonist of the first part, becomes protagonist in the second. These three characters, moreover, Caesar, Brutus, and Hamlet, are a close and careful—perhaps a first—study of Aristotle's *ἀναπρία* type (p. 415); Othello, Lear, and Timon keep near it; others, till we reach "Coriolanus," modify his principle to some extent.

"Othello," first of all, repeats an experiment faintly begun in "Julius Caesar," and formally carried out in "Hamlet," that namely, of involving a woman in the catastrophe; and secondly, as I noticed in my review of the play, it comes nearest to admitting accident, almost ignores motive, and exhibits evil approximately absolute, while it withdraws restitution as far as possible from

human sight; and this chiefly because the agent of evil is not, like Macbeth, tortured by his Nemesis, but is indifferent to it; perhaps even finds an artistic pleasure, whether in the Nemesis or the indifference; and finally, Justice seems driven out by Fate, and the good is *trampled on* rather than *sacrificed*.

If "Othello" were Shakespeare's one tragic effort, it might even leave us depressed, and modify our estimate of the writer as a tragic poet.

But Caesar and Brutus and Hamlet have come before it, all glorious in their doom; and we pass on to "King Lear," where again tragedy fulfils the most advanced moral and aesthetic conditions; if the criminals are not all repentant, they are all human—more human than Iago; even Goneril has passions. But further, as I have shown in the sixth Chapter, love, far from being destroyed by the tragedy, is more than triumphant; it is actually *created*. It is created in the heart of Lear, which, like that of Gloucester, burst smilingly; Kent found that, if the end of life is love, so also the end of love is immortality: "I have a journey, Sir, shortly to go; My master calls me"; it was fitting that this one of Shakespeare's fools should be made immortal not by folly, but by sacrifice; that he should "go to bed at noon,"<sup>1</sup> having loved, and therefore lived his best day; and of Cordelia, what more could we or would we say than this:

Meekly she bore her life of beauteous deeds,  
And softly, at love's call, she laid it down.<sup>2</sup>

There is no poem more sublime in its ethical purpose than "King Lear."

As to the type of the poem, Lear is of course the victim

<sup>1</sup> This means—probably—"die in the prime of life, and not in the ordinary course of nature, at three score and ten." Cf. "lay to bed," ("The Tempest," II. i. 284) or "came into my bed" (probable reading, "Twelfth Night," V. 410). Cf. Halliwell's quotation; "It is bedde time with a man at three score and tenne." (Overbury, "Characters.")

<sup>2</sup> "Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low." ("King Lear," V. iii. 272.)

of *ἀναπρία*; but Cordelia belongs to our first division of tragedy (p. 414); this I am compelled to assert, in spite of opinions to the contrary. She is Shakespeare's ideal of *devotion* (and therefore a woman); she is the embodiment (and there are many such in the play) of a love loftier than the sexual, wider than that of the family, human-divine; for the love of humanity, as it broadens into the love of God (Chap. VII) is the theme of this marvellous drama. Certainly Cordelia is without blemish and without spot, and upon such sacrifices the gods themselves throw incense.

Closely related to this is the important aspect of the play mentioned on pp. 310, 311, namely, the didactic; this spirit of stern denunciation it shares in some degree with "Measure for Measure," "Troilus and Cressida," and "Timon of Athens." One other aspect may be noticed here, though it is less intimately connected with our subject of dramatic evolution: "King Lear" reminds us of our remarks on acting, Chap. I, pp. 3-7; it is great as a drama, but equally great as a poem—perhaps greater; we may even strike this balance; in the study we may lose one tenth of the drama; at the theatre we lose nine-tenths of the poem.

My note on "Macbeth," "if all be not in vain" ("In Memoriam," 114), is the most important of all; but first I must enlarge a remark on a former page;—if it is hard to detach dogma from religion, it is harder to detach religion from morality, and it is hardest, it is impossible, to detach morality from life. Once more, we cannot even provisionally eliminate morality from art, unless we eliminate it from humanity; and, as I have shown above, it cannot even for a moment be thus eliminated. We cannot allow the "tragic idea" to disabuse us of our all-pervading sense of right and wrong; we must not lose the villain in the hero; we must not forget that his crime is greater in proportion to his "tragic" greatness, for *noblesse oblige*; we must not forget that greatness is a quality which man

shares, partly, with the mastodon, whereas goodness is something both later and greater; and that (footnote, p. 412) the virtuous peasant, the "better being," is of more account to humanity—if not also to God—than the vicious prince. But our business is to find out what Shakespeare intended in his tragedy; if his view of life is non-moral, retrogressive, I for one shall reject it. We will examine it as it appears in "Macbeth."

Let us begin with a statement of the relation between the protagonist and his doom in the three kinds of tragedy, as we find it in Shakespeare. If the protagonist is (a) good, or (b) more sinned against than sinning, then the agent of his death is evil; but—and this is a most important distinction—if (c) the protagonist is evil, as in the case of Macbeth, then he meets his doom at the hands of the good.

Next, I have said (Chap. VI, p. 321) that at the close of the play Shakespeare drops the showman and moralizes as one of ourselves. He often does this. He dismisses Hamlet to heaven. What does he say of Macbeth? Does he find him as the author of "Shakespearean tragedy" finds him, a "noble nature," "nearer to the heart of things . . . than the . . . 'better' beings," greater, that is, than goodness? I think not. Surely, in this drama of "vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself," the poet's moral is exactly the opposite. And it is pronounced with a remarkable distinctness and severity; we find it, for example, in a single line—"Let *the angel whom thou still hast served*," a line that is best explained by Shakespeare himself—"Till my bad angel fire my good one out" (Sonnet 114).<sup>1</sup>

It is the same with the "fiend-like Queen" of this "fiend of Scotland"; the woman also drove her better angel from her side<sup>2</sup>; she more than abetted her husband in a crime which slaughtered thousands, and convulsed a

<sup>1</sup> It is also important to notice how, in his version of the story, Shakespeare makes Macbeth more flagrantly criminal.

<sup>2</sup> Sonnet 144, etc

kingdom; indeed, from one point of view, she seems even worse than Goneril, for she deliberately "unsex'd herself"; and with certain differences she will appear again as the "devilish Queen" of *Cymbeline*. But what are Shakespeare's parting words to her—"More needs she the divine than the physician."

After dealing with the selfishness of self as in "*Timon of Athens*," and the vanity of immoral pleasure in "*Antony and Cleopatra*," Shakespeare returns in "*Coriolanus*" to a character—if I may repeat his own apt phrase—"more sinned against than sinning"; it is as though he wished to emphasize the distinction between imperfection and crime (especially in the passage referred to on pp. 414, 415), and thus to pass naturally to plays wherein imperfection should be merged in the larger motive of love.

## V. THE COMEDIES

Love, I may repeat, is the leading subject of Shakespeare's art-work as a whole, and one of its aspects, the love of the sexes, is the main motive of the comedies which we have now to consider; indeed, the relation of most of the plays—and we might add the poems—to the growth of Shakespeare's art, is clearly indicated by their women; merely to mention the names of Shakespeare's heroines in the order of their creation, from *Rosaline* to *Miranda*, is to trace the development of his mind and soul and art. And we return for a moment to the tragedies, for it is a notable fact that, with one or two trifling exceptions, Shakespeare has sacrificed a woman on the tragic altar; but this has been already explained. Here we have to notice that even in the early comedies Shakespeare's women are a new creation in drama. This is evident when we compare him with his predecessors, or even his contemporaries. As was pointed out in Chapter VI, these women are neither slaves nor dolls, nor deities,



nor yet the man-monsters of a later day; they never cease to be women, though admitted to some rightful equality with men. And as to the later Romances, the mere names, *Marina*, *Perdita*, *Hermione*, *Imogen*, *Miranda*, enable us to realize that Shakespeare has established the ideal of woman for all remaining time.

Otherwise the Comedies may be arranged in three groups. The first was noticed above (p. 395); the second consists chiefly of "The Merchant of Venice," "The Merry Wives of Windsor," "As You Like It," "Much Ado about Nothing," and "Twelfth Night," to which we may add three of the Histories, viz., "1 and 2 Henry IV," and "Henry V." These dramas have much in common, and the clearest distinction between them and the earlier plays has already been drawn (p. 405), where, speaking of the historic trilogy, I pointed to its extraordinary advance in naturalness of language, in the adaptation of language to character, and, I may add, in characterization itself.

At this point I have to remark that three of the comedies should be treated by themselves; these are, "All's Well that Ends Well," which (p. 178) belongs to two periods of Shakespeare's authorship and has characteristics of each; and "Troilus and Cressida" and "Measure for Measure," which come within his tragic period, and are darkened almost phenomenally by the prevailing tragic gloom.

Returning to the second group of comedies, we note that while becoming thoughtful, and admitting the presence of more potent evil, they contain, nevertheless, the very marrow of mirth; even the dramatised history rings with laughter, and I must repeat that its mightiest monarch is Falstaff. Notable also is the brilliance of their dialogue, and much of it is due to the word or wit combats, in which the women are mostly allowed the advantage.

But it is this very smartness and lightness of dialogue,

especially as regards the female characters (p. 247), that most of all separates these eight or nine plays of Shakespeare's middle period from his closing trilogy of love and beauty and peace. These three Romances, "Cymbeline," "The Winter's Tale," and "The Tempest,"—and we may include the Shakespearean portions of "Pericles"—are perhaps the most original<sup>1</sup> of all his productions; and in some respects they are the most delightful. They renew the theme of sexual love, and their men as well as their women reach the highest ideal in life or literature; they renew the wit and wisdom, the pathos and power, the truth and beauty of all the former plays, but they add a fresh delight in nature, a firmer trust in God, a kindlier belief in man and man's destiny. Their very faults are often those nameless graces which are beyond the reach of art, while their artistic excellences are such that here, if anywhere, admiration might almost be allowed to out-run appreciation.

## VI. CHARACTERIZATION

Next to the plays themselves, the most interesting line of development is that which passes through characterization. This, however, has been traced in part;<sup>2</sup> and we have found even in the earlier dramas some masterly sketches of character, but chiefly of the humorous type. And herein we may repeat that, just as the beginner will find it easier to write, or recite, or draw characters, in dialect, so in Shakespeare, Bottom and Falstaff and Fluellen are created before Hamlet is attempted; and whereas the three former are made without hands, and spring into their

<sup>1</sup> The influence of Beaumont and Fletcher (e.g. in "Philaster"), as some maintain, is by no means proved (see p. 342), nor are the Greek and Italian influence alleged by others.

<sup>2</sup> The moral ascent of the male characters was indicated on p. 397, but briefly; and I may remind the reader that where space is limited I can only suggest, or give the mere outline.

perfect and eternal being, Hamlet, on the contrary, is shaped and chiselled, and even thereafter brought, as is possible, unfinished from the workshop.

Again, character is developed or discovered only by interaction with character, and life by the environment of life; thus the dramas of Shakespeare pass gradually from single to multiple characterization. This line of development we have followed through the Historical Plays, which will be far enough for the purpose of the present volume, if we add that in "Henry IV" humanity for the first time plays its legitimate part, while "Henry V" gives us a magnificent exhibition of the whole of human life; and its motive, the glory of England, is no more obtrusive than stage scenery or stage music.

## VII. TECHNIQUE

Besides this gradual widening of life and advance of power in its presentation and interpretation, we discover a growth in Shakespeare's art as he learns to rely less frequently on the various mechanical contrivances of dramatic construction; for example, the setting off of character against character, group against group, incident against incident; and we may say generally that the devices of balance and antithesis which are often obtrusive in the early dramas, are either disguised or abandoned in the later masterpieces.

Less noteworthy, perhaps, is Shakespeare's progress in the other main elements of his craft. There is as much skilful weaving and interweaving of plot or underplot in "The Merchant of Venice" as in "The Tempest"; still, we must repeat, that the poet's advance as a playwright may always be discovered in the increasing fineness of the literary threads that are shot through the dramatic texture.

Yet again, it is sometimes difficult to discover in Shake-

speare those advances in general knowledge,—new facts, new theories, new tongues,—which are so well marked in many writers whose period of authorship covers much less than his twenty prolific years; in respect of observation, information, and even learning, there is not, as we have seen already, so very much to choose between “*Love’s Labour’s Lost*” and “*Troilus and Cressida*,” although the latter is a literary *tour de force*; indeed, Shakespeare almost seems to have collected his vast store of knowledge before he took up his dramatic pen. Of course we may often watch him as he turns eagerly to some new book, or lingers over the pages of an old one, or takes down his notes after listening to some travelled friend; yet we rarely meet with a writer possessed from the very first of such a fund of information.

(a) *Verse*.—We may now trace the development of the blank verse for which Shakespeare is so justly famous; indeed, the stages of this development are often our surest guide to the chronology of the plays.<sup>1</sup> Yet here again we are confronted with the problem of mingled maturity and immaturity in the same play, as will be evident if we compare “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” V. ii. 32-35, or IV. i. 23-27 with V. i. 12-17 or IV. i. 116-121. In the first two we have the blank verse of the beginner, who makes sentence and phrase coincide with his line; thus thought helps metre; the metrical bars, moreover, are of the same pattern; pause follows pause with unvarying monotony, and the whole verse is measured with the maximum of certainty and the minimum of trouble. But in the other two passages (though these (p. 157) may be interpolations) this unmelodious product of rule and line is abandoned, and everything is built to music; the bone frame

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare’s own remarks are full of interest, and have some bearing on a progress in fluency and variety; thus, we have in “*Much Ado*,” “run smoothly in the even road of a blank verse”; in “*Hamlet*,” “The blank verse shall halt for it”; in “*As You Like It*,” “An you talk in blank verse,” etc.

of metre is disguised by the living form of *rhythm*; the most obvious of structural elements, the very lines themselves, headed by their capital letters, are merged in a new line formation which extends from pause to pause, and the verse is still further varied by the introduction of extra syllables that vibrate for a moment within the line, or reverberate at its close.

(b) *Rhyme*. Next may come the use and disuse of rhyme. I have referred (p. 12), to the rival influences of Greene and Marlowe upon the form and spirit of Shakespeare's dramatic work, and to the fact that he ultimately rejected the lighter and followed the graver Muse; yet if these influences had been withdrawn, it is more than probable that Shakespeare, like Milton, would have cast his best work in that highest artistic mould of blank verse. As is well known, he gradually abandoned couplet and quatrain and other lyric tendencies, though of course he made a legitimate use of rhyme to the very last. In "The Tempest," for example, we have a masque composed entirely of rhyming verse, especially the pentameter couplet; and there is scarcely a play in which we do not meet with these sounding couplets employed more or less happily, whether to heighten some effect, to mark an *aside*, to point a moral, or adorn the last words of a speech, or, as most frequently, to announce the close of a scene, and thus in some measure to anticipate the fall of the curtain.

Beyond this I do not attempt to discover any law that governs Shakespeare's use of rhyme; and as to his prose, I shall content myself with calling attention to its absence or very tentative use in some of the earlier plays; to its increase as his dramas became more *lifelike*; and to the general rule that prose is employed where verse is least suitable. But I may mention that statistics have been compiled from the varying character of Shakespeare's verse, and some of these, which may be useful to the

student, will be found in an Appendix to this volume. I must, however, point out that they should be received with caution, and with the understanding that the period of Shakespeare's authorship, the growth of his powers, or the identification of his work are not to be determined by arbitrary tables or figures, but rather by the intangible evidence of the general style.

(c) *Vocabulary*. Much also may be learnt from the history of the poet's word-craft—and, I may add, his phrase-craft; though never inexpert as an artist in language, yet, as time proceeds, he amasses much technical and some literary material, and gains command over the resources of literary composition. Most noteworthy are his discoveries of the turns of expression that give both continuity and vigour to dialogue; connecting words and phrases, phrases of greeting and farewell, of courtesy and compliment, of gesture, deportment, demeanour. Hundreds of these expressions, which are now so familiar, were the invention of Shakespeare, and they are among his most important contributions to the power and beauty of our English tongue; and of course the range of his vocabulary is far greater than that of any other writer. Notable also is the poet's use of compound words, especially in the later plays, where we have his most daring experiments of both thought and diction.

(d) *Dialect*. In connection with this subject of vocabulary, we must briefly comment on Shakespeare's use of dialect. This, as we might expect, is most abundant in the earlier plays; for, as I pointed out in my "Handbook to Tennyson," the device of dialect commends itself most of all to the beginner. At its best, and even in prose, dialect is often distasteful; its realism is too real; it is like calling a dog a "bow-wow," or using Latin in a modern liturgy, or making a French character speak in French, which, by the way, Shakespeare has done in some of his earlier dramas. And indeed nothing can be

more instructive than to trace his gradual distrust and disuse of the grosser and more grotesque devices of verbal realism, including this of dialect. Nevertheless, it is in the drama that dialect finds its most legitimate place; as the verbal material of a poem it has but a slight claim to literary rank; but in the dramatic interplay its use is like the occasional employment of an archaic word to produce a certain effect of contrast. Still I must repeat that the history of dialect in Shakespeare is a history of gradual disuse.

(c) *Imagery*. Here also we may speak of Shakespeare's incomparable resource and use of imagery; from first to last he is nothing if not amazingly graphic and picturesque—and sometimes to the detriment of his dramatic intention; in no writer do we find such a sparing use of the abstract symbol, such profusion of the concrete figure (see p. 49); yet again, his employment of the pictorial element of speech is marked by a gradual increase in beauty, freshness, and force; the most striking improvement being a change from variations on the same metaphor, as notably in "Richard II,"<sup>1</sup> to the employment of rapidly succeeding yet independent metaphors, as in most of the later plays. And there is yet another distinction; in Shakespeare's earlier work a large proportion of his rhetorical figures are literary; in his mature work they are mostly original.<sup>2</sup> But finally, whether first hand or borrowed, whether consciously called to his aid or rushing irresistible and unbidden into his verse, the metaphors and similes of Shakespeare have that priceless appearance of spontaneity which aroused the admiration of Dryden—"His images from nature he drew not laboriously, but luckily."

Not altogether distinct from his use of imagery is the poet's habit of repeating his thought, usually in some

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 146 and 403 (footnote).

<sup>2</sup> See page 76.

more picturesque form; and thus he often proves his own interpreter. This is a very important point, but I can give only one example. In the famous "If it were done" passage ("Macbeth," I. vii. 1-5), the thought is repeated no less than four times: thus (1) "If it were done when 'tis done"; (2) "if the assassination could trammel up the consequence"; (3) "and catch with his surcease success"; (4) "if but . . . time." Here, if in doubt, we can interpret "success" by means of the word it repeats, viz., "consequence."<sup>1</sup>

(f) *Style.* And now finally, of his language and his style in general, it may be stated under this head of Development, that in the earlier plays the language is more laboured, less fluent, less vital to the thought; then follows a period of perfect harmony between thought and form; and later, the utterance of speech seems to fail before the poet's impetuous imaginings. Approximate dates for these periods of style would be 1590-1598; 1598-1603; 1603-1610; and something of their history has been given in former pages. Here I will exhibit more in detail the most important of these changes, that is to say where we trace them through the period of the great tragedies. In most of the earlier plays, say "Richard II," mere language has unduly claimed the poet's attention; but in "Julius Caesar," the balance of thought and form has become even; nor is it disturbed by passion. In "Hamlet," passion enters; yet we have a play of experiments, uncertain and unfinished. Then comes "Othello," the most perfect of the tragedies in form and finish; language, thought, and passion blend in a triune harmony. In "King Lear," on the contrary, passion sometimes threatens if it does not destroy form, and the torrent of verse outstrips drama. In "Macbeth," passion rages yet more fiercely, and often tears the garment of speech to tatters;

<sup>1</sup> See also p. 40: also the Author's (Arden) edition of "Twelfth Night," note on II. iv. 111-116, etc.



here we come upon the most daring violence of style; it is rapid, rugged, distorted—but probably unfinished; the play seems to have been hastily written, and the text has certainly been tampered with. Nevertheless it prepares us for the “happy valiancy” of the style of “Antony and Cleopatra,” wherein violence is repressed by poetry till it becomes strength, and passion is subdued by beauty. In “Coriolanus,” *the violence subsists unrestrained by poetry*, and passion is unbeauteous; this therefore is the least lovely and the most tedious of all the tragedies. But in the Romances that follow, the impetuous style is again saved by lyric intensity, and a softer emotion is mated to a tenderer beauty.

This mention of style leads us to notice that what may be called *good taste* in Shakespeare is marked by a growth which, however gradual, is the most striking of all. Under this head come his disuse of puns, conceits, whether of thought or diction, and the other crude devices of a beginner in style, or of a style that is beginning; for it is not easy to determine how far these blots on too many of the pages of Shakespeare are due to his own defect, carelessness, or perverseness, or to the vogue of an age of countless experiments in expression; or—but this excuse is dangerous—to the exigencies of dramatic dialogue; and yet another excuse is perhaps equally dangerous; I refer to the plea that Shakespeare wrote as an actor who catered for the groundlings as well as the gallants. This much is certain, that although on occasion he condemns puns and other such affectations of language, he never quite freed himself from their influence. To the very last, moreover (p. 44), the poet delights to leave a grammatical construction ambiguous, or to moralize two, three, even four meanings in one word. Further (pp. 321, 338), he will employ a striking word or phrase several times in the same play; such mannerisms, however, are not frequent.

And we must add that defects in Shakespeare, if rightly regarded, may even remind us of his greatness; often they bear witness to a literary power so absolute that but for this occasional defiance of convention we might forget its immeasurable superiority; and thus it comes to pass that the defects of a smaller writer are almost the merits of Shakespeare.

Under this head it is useful to compare Shakespeare with Ben Jonson; almost any example of their different methods of expressing the same thought will give Shakespeare the advantage; here is one from a large number; Jonson writes, "The coward and the valiant man must fall; Only the cause and manner how discerns them"; but how much more of everything that goes to make *poetry* will be found in this of Shakespeare—"Cowards die many times before their death; The valiant never taste of death but once."

Next let us ask, Why is it that the average reader or playgoer of our day knows a good deal of Shakespeare, but comparatively nothing of Jonson? Something of the answer was given by Leonard Digges in his verses prefixed to the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's "Poems"; there we read that an audience who were "ravished" with "Julius Caesar," would not "brook a line Of tedious though well-laboured Catiline." This seems to imply that the genius of Shakespeare was more intuitive, and less dependent on scholarship, artistic training, and the critical faculties. But other answers might be given, so many indeed that we fall back on the whole truth—Shakespeare's genius was greater than that of Jonson. If Jonson is more correct, so is he more insipid. And although as an artist Shakespeare is sometimes careless and unequal, though he seldom attains an "unfailing level of style," and is an Aeschylus rather than a Sophocles, we rest content with our assumption that his extraordinary greatness, both of intellect and imagination, left him compara-

tively indifferent to—perhaps we may say, exempt from—the law of flawless workmanship. This much, at least, seems certain, that to dwell upon such defects in this great poet may be an easy task, but it may also betray both ignorance and insolence; whereas a right appreciation of his excellences is as difficult as it is profitable.

And to some of these excellences we will now give our attention; but I must first bring forward a proof of their abundance; let us merely ask ourselves how much will be left if we take Shakespeare and his influence from the last hundred years of our stage and our literature? Nor does this apply exclusively to the spectacular or artistic productions of these hundred years, but rather to the whole mass of their intellectual output. But more than this: for Shakespeare lives not alone in the theatre and the library; he lives in our daily speech, in our words of grace or power or wisdom; in our deeds, our emotions, our aspirations; he lives in all that is noblest in the life of our modern world.

### VIII. SUBJECTS AND THEIR TREATMENT

In the preceding chapter I touched upon the poet's wisdom, both intellectual and moral, and we now enter the wide field of his reading—his knowledge;<sup>1</sup> but it is practically without limit; I will therefore select two or three of the more important subjects under this head.

(a) *Science*.—Though by temperament and profession an artist, Shakespeare had listened attentively to whatever the centuries might tell him of observed or imagined phenomena, and no less eagerly caught at each new development of contemporary science; and possibly he made observations himself. Certain it is that his mention

<sup>1</sup> After centuries of investigation, much of this—I think the greater part—remains unexplored.

of a new scientific fact more than once coincides with the accepted date of its discovery. By way of illustrating the scientific bent of the dramatist, I will refer to "The Winter's Tale," IV. iv. 89-92 (and the context) where, with his usual philosophy of antithesis he removes and restores the provisional border-ground between nature and art, but speaks throughout as if he were himself an adherent, or at least an observer, of practical science. Witness also his profound interest in the new theory of the circulation of the blood ("Julius Caesar," II. i. 289); of the action of gravity ("Troilus and Cressida," IV. ii. 109, 110); and so forth. But apart from conjecture, we are certain that Shakespeare, like some of our modern poets, made ample and striking literary use of the new knowledge of his time;<sup>1</sup> a new map will serve him for a simile ("Twelfth Night," III. ii. 85), and a new colony for an episode (as in "The Tempest").

(b) *Nature*.—Even in his dealings with nature we seem to discover a tendency to scientific analysis; but often, as was inevitable in that early day, with a resultant pseudo-scientific, or, as some one has phrased it, "unnatural natural history." A good example will be found in "Henry V," I. i. 59-61; or in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (I. i. 215) we read, "In their gold coats spots you see . . . In those freckles lives their savours"; and then, some fifteen years later, we have, "Cinque-spotted like the crimson drops I' the bottom of a cowslip" ("Cymbeline," II. ii. 38). This double reference to the spots in the cowslip might make some of us suspect that the poet is indebted to a book, or, as above, that we have scientific trifling; but it is more profitable and more delightful to discover in these lines a direct observer of the natural world, who writes with his eye on the scenes he loved, and has never forgotten the flowers that grew in the Stratford meadows. As a

<sup>1</sup> In regard to astronomy, he appears ("Troilus and Cressida," I. iii. 85-86) to reject the Copernican system, of which even Milton was doubtful.

boy, let us say, he has looked into the bell of the cowslip, and as a man of fifty in London he loves to recall the impressions of his youth, or—and this is more probable—to renew them.

But this close inspection of a natural object, though it may have been a habit with Shakespeare, is not always the method of his verse; as we have seen in the fourth Chapter, he takes only what is necessary to his dramatic purpose; he does not omit to read nature through books, to note the ideal colouring already given by poet or philosopher to bird or beast or flower—to add to this, or to modify it; and ultimately, by whatever means, to endow it with some new poetic beauty, and therewith, if need be, the final grace of fact. Indeed, no poet has so happily combined the conventional, the poetical, and the actual attributes of a natural object.

(c) *The Supernatural*.—From Shakespeare's dealings with the natural world, let us now pass to his dealings with the supernatural. If history, as we have remarked, was story to the mass of the people in those days, so on the other hand story—or much of it—was history; thus also superstition received general credit, and the cruder aspects of the supernatural had their popular warrant. Nothing, therefore, could be more appropriate than Shakespeare's use of history, superstition, and the supernatural; and the latter, as we have seen in our review of *Hamlet* (p. 276), was his best means of representing Providence on the stage. But a word must be added on the subject of Shakespeare's own convictions or opinions; fortunately, it is ready to hand; we shall find all that we require in the statements of Bacon: "Sorcery and witchcraft have an element of superstition, but are worthy of classification and investigation. . . . There is a superstition in avoiding superstition. . . . I would sooner believe most incredible marvels of any religion, than that all nature works without a Providence." To make these remarks

applicable to Shakespeare we need not add nor take away a single word.

Returning now to the supernatural as presented to us by this poet in the companion plays of "Julius Caesar" and "Hamlet," we have portents, prodigies, presentiments, augury, dreams, apparitions. Many of these have their classic origin, and need not detain us; but a word must be said on the ghost in Shakespeare, and its kindred—the demon, the angel, the genius, the spirit. These four are often identical, and are mostly of two kinds, the good and the bad—"Two spirits do suggest me still. . . . The better angel. . . . The worser spirit" (Sonnet 144). Sometimes they are identified with the spirits of the departed, for the ghost of Caesar is the evil spirit of Brutus. And as to the spiritual reappearance of the dead, their confines, their habits, and the like, we have a very complete summary in "Hamlet," where the ghost unfolds some of the secrets of its prison-house. Still, though the purgatorial view of ghosts and the Hereafter commends itself to the poet, he reflects, nevertheless, that no traveller returns from that undiscovered country, and that this eternal blazon is not for mortal ears. Such a reverent confession of ignorance is biblical, and some would accept it as Shakespeare's confession of faith; but if we keep the whole of his work within our view, we must add finally and generally that he gives free and undramatic expression to our best belief—a belief in God and love and immortality. Even in "Hamlet" we have a multitude of unconscious reflections that spring from the depths of conviction—"There's a divinity that shapes our ends"; "Passing through nature to eternity"; "It is an honest ghost"; "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (*i.e.*, philosophy in general).

Thus the drama of Shakespeare is ennobled, and the world is better for these sleepers who are waked from

their graves by his so potent art; and the world, as Wordsworth tells us, is better for those other ideal beings, the elves and the fairies that are brought from their mysterious confines by Shakespeare's poetic wand; better for the gods who are summoned from their skies, for heaven's cherubin, horsed upon the sightless couriers of the air, ay, even for Hecate and her beldams, and their pit 'of Acheron. (See pp. 318, 360.)

(d) *The Drama*.—From science and nature and the supernatural we will now turn to the arts; and even here we have evidence of the composite, the new-old, or at least the antithetical treatment; and this we may keep in mind when we are struck by the poet's bearing towards the drama, and even the art of verse wherewith he chose to adorn the drama; he seems almost to despise the dramatic and poetic masterpieces that so seldom bore his name; possibly he preserves a compromise among the varying opinions of his day. But some of the antithetical elements that explain this bearing were pointed out in my sketch of the poet's life (Chap. IV); and in the review of the "Sonnets" some notice was taken of contemporary prejudice which lightly esteemed literature and condemned the drama. Coke, for example, spoke of actors, poetasters, and playwrights as degraded and profane; and we have similar testimony in "The Return from Parnassus," and elsewhere. On the other hand, we must admit that Bacon's remark as I quote it on page 51: "Though it be of ill repute as a profession;" has this context—"yet as a *part of discipline* it is of excellent use." Doubtless he has in mind Aristotle's *kátharosis* (p. 413); and so Shakespeare in "Hamlet," after striking the notes of controversy, disparagement, and the rest, admits the half-truth that actors are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time, and that the purpose of playing "is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image." Therefore (especi-

ally taking into account such favourable contemporary opinions as those of Thomas Nashe), we may infer that in what Shakespeare expressed or suggested, we have by no means the whole truth about the drama as he understood it.

One other reflection concerns us here. As I noticed in my "Handbook to Tennyson" (p. 399), to Shakespeare's literary qualifications for writing good drama there was added an actual and a thorough experience of the stage; and to this we may attribute not a little of the perfection of his plays. Besides this, and apart from his superb genius, Shakespeare was aided—strange as it must seem—by the very rudeness of the Elizabethan theatre, and of the art of acting in his day. This is a most important point; he was compelled to make his drama as realistic as possible, to provide vivid description and countless minor touches—his own scenery, in fact (see, for example, the opening scene in "Hamlet,"), and to leave as little as possible to the impersonating faculty of the actor. But some of these points have been touched upon in my Preliminary Chapter.

(e) *Poetry*.—Next, as to Shakespeare's estimate of poetry, this also has been examined or illustrated in former chapters; but something must be added or repeated here. We have noticed how that estimate was affected by contemporary prejudice, and still more by such classical doctrines as those of Plato and Aristotle; and I may refer to the above quotations relating to the drama. But as under that head, so under this, we may give Shakespeare the credit of believing more than he has stated; and after weighing the usual antitheta, we may select "the force of heaven-bred poesy," from expressions that fill the far heavier scale of opinion in favour of an art which owes a good deal of its supremacy to his genius alone.

(f) *The other Arts*.—Certainly Shakespeare realized th



immense superiority of poetry over the other arts in the power to delight and ennoble; but next to poetry he revered music. A good poet should be a lover of music, if not also a good musician. This is as true of Shakespeare as it was of Milton; and although the music of Shakespeare has recently engaged the attention of competent authors, I venture to think that the last word has not been said on the subject. Further, from the poet's work, as a whole, I gain the impression that he was by no means lacking in his appreciation of the other arts—painting, sculpture, even architecture; but these we must leave as we pass on to examine in detail the art which he identified so largely with his life.

#### IX. SHAKESPEARE AS POET

(a) *Imagination*.—I shall venture to remark on certain qualities of Shakespeare's poetry that have not, I believe, been fully recognized; and next to its superb and abundant imagery, I should place the subtlety of its imagination—a quality that we scarcely look for in a writer of such power and wisdom. Yet we may note the inimitable refinement of the imaginative process which is exemplified by the word "sound" in "Twelfth Night," I. i. 5, and we are amazed to think that Pope and a host of commentators after him, should have laboured to destroy all that beauty by the reading "south." We note also (l. 7) the exquisite "stealing and giving"; the intense splendour of this verse is not overmatched by Shelley's imaginative melodies,—*"Music so delicate, soft, and intense, It was felt like an odour within the sense."*

(b) *Dramatic quality*.—The same opening lines of "Twelfth Night" will illustrate another striking feature of Shakespeare's poetry—its adaptiveness to character. As I have remarked in my edition of the play, to write such a passage is to be a poet of the very first order; but

how marvellous must be the faculty that not only writes it, but also compels each line of it to lend colour to the dramatic character from whose lips it falls. And this is true of the characters generally, in all but the earliest plays; their speech is a mirror of their mind, from the inimitable waggery of Falstaff down to the finest study of all—the barbarian child of nature, Caliban, whose speech, like that of Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, is half picture and half music. But perhaps the best known example of this adaptation of utterance to character occurs in the play of "Julius Caesar," where the formal prose logic of Brutus is swept away by the impassioned verse-rhetoric of Mark Antony.

There is a third and last characteristic of the poetry of Shakespeare which I shall notice in this chapter; I speak of its adaptation to changing dramatic conditions or situations. Even under this head I might refer to the same lines from "Twelfth Night," and show that on occasion the Duke can change the manner of his speech from languor to vigour; but Shakespeare's mastery over the instrument of words is best illustrated if I call attention to his wonderful command of either literary style, the simple or the elaborate, and in the same play; of this a most striking example will be found cited in my "New Studies in Tennyson," pp. 39 to 41, where I contrast "Othello," III. iii. 453 *sqq.* with V. ii. 17-19; and "King Lear," III. ii. 2 *sqq.* with V. iii. 305-311.

(c) *Wit and Humour*.—To melody and imagery, therefore, to fancy and imagination, to spontaneity and reflectiveness, to inspiration and meditation, to knowledge and wisdom, to beauty and power, to all these excellences of the poetry of Shakespeare that were indicated in this chapter, we have now added its dramatic perfection. But I am never willing to conclude a notice, however brief, of the art of this great poet, without reference to his faculty of wit and his soul of humour. Once more, and more than

ever, he is supreme; for his wit, while it ranges from word-play to wisdom, is not only astounding, it is also healthy and joyous; it may dazzle, but it will not blind; it may sharpen, but it never wounds. So is it with his soul of humour; and even in the earlier plays, where, like Henry with Falstaff, it yet dallies with wit, the lesson it teaches is a plain one, and should be learnt by all of us; that to laugh is of more profit than to weep, and that to sneer—even at folly—is the mark of a fool; but to smile on the weakness of humanity till it smiles on itself and is healed, may be a wise man's pastime and his honour.

This early flower of Shakespeare's philosophy in art is indeed admirable and precious; but more marvellous still is the absolutely priceless fruit of a humour divine rather than mortal, the god-like intelligence that sees through the whole of human life, and therefore smiles serenely on its tears. And thus it comes about that the part played by the Fool in "King Lear" brings home to us hardly less than Cordelia's the inner motive of that drama—love, which together with beauty and wisdom is the motive of the whole poetry and drama of Shakespeare.

## APPENDIX I

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

**I**F this notice of the literature that deals with Shakespeare should appear unusually short, I shall claim it as a matter of some credit to myself; for, although my omissions may not be equally just, yet the chief service I can render to reader or student is to warn him of the need of economy in this department of study, and to withhold mention of the innumerable works or fragments of works on Shakespeare that would profit him little, or even waste his time and mar his appreciation.

The text of Shakespeare in a small compass is supplied by the Globe Edition, or by the Oxford Shakespeare, edited by W. J. Craig. Of larger editions, the Cambridge Shakespeare is the best. A small reprint of the Folio of 1623 appeared in 1876 (Chatto and Windus, 7s. 6d.), a larger one in three parts had been issued by Lionel Booth about ten years earlier. Of the plays in separate annotated volumes, the Arden Shakespeare, in course of publication by Messrs. Methuen, and edited by W. J. Craig, 2s. 6d. each, may be mentioned first; it is supplied with textual as well as critical and explanatory notes, and comprehensive introductions. Failing these, the student might have recourse to a volume of the Variorum edition of Furness, 18s., or to a school edition such as *The Warwick Falcon*, *The Pitt Press*, *the Student's*, *Macmillan's* or *the Clarendon Press*. Edward Dowden and Samuel Butler may also be mentioned as editors of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, and George Wyndham of the *Sonnets and Poems*.

Separate plays at 1s. with Introductions and brief notes are furnished by the Eversley Shakespeare, or the Temple Shakespeare; the Chiswick Shakespeare, and the "Little Quarto," may also be mentioned. Finally, the Variorum edition (Boswell's Malone) of 1821 is still invaluable.

Among earlier editions are those of Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, Warburton, Capell, Johnson, Steevens, Malone, and Reed. Other helps to Shakespeare study were suggested in the eighteenth century by Upton, Grey, Fleath, and Farmer; and among later names are Chalmers, Douce, Drake, Singer, Knight, Dyce, Staunton, Grant White, Keightley, Collier, Halliwell-Phillips, Hunter, Fleay, Cowden-Clarke, Hudson, Rolfe. A good short introduction to the study of Shakespeare is still the Primer of Edward Dowden; his larger work, "Shakespeare, his Mind and Art" will be found very useful; Swinburne's "Study of Shakespeare" is suggestive. Among earlier æsthetic critics Coleridge ranks high; Hazlitt must also be mentioned, and Lamb, and Leigh Hunt, and Ruskin; abroad, Goethe and Victor Hugo have said good things about Shakespeare; and others who have done more or less useful work are Schlegel (to whom Coleridge was much indebted), Ulrici, Gervinus, Elze, Kreyssig, Delius, Montégut, Stapfer, Jusserand, Mézières, Brandes, Garlanda, etc., etc.

The best short Introduction to Shakespeare and his times will be found in "The Age of Shakespeare," 2 vols., 3s. 6d., by Seccombe and Allen (Bell); a good Biography is that of Mr. Sidney Lee; the best studies of Shakespeare's grammar are those of Abbott and Franz; Sidney Walker's "Shakespeare Versification" and König's "Der Vers in Shakspere's Dramen," are useful; as also Dr. Furnivall's Introduction to the Leopold Shakespeare, Essays by Watkiss Lloyd, Mrs. Jameson's "Characteristics of Women," Ward's "English Dramatic Literature," "Shakespeare and his Predecessors," by Boas, "Shakespeare as a

Dramatic Artist," by Moulton, Dowden's Introduction to Shakespeare (published by Blackie), Mr. Churton Collins, "Studies in Shakespeare," and perhaps the most indispensable of all helps is the "Shakespeare Lexicon" of Dr. Schmidt (2 vols.).

Other useful books are Madden's "Diary of Master William Silence," Naylor's "Shakespeare and Music," the "Transactions of the New Shakspeare Society," the "Jahrbücher" of the German Shakespeare Society, Ingleby's "Centurie of Prayse," and Phin's "Cyclopaedia of Shakespeare."

For sources the reader may consult Hazlitt's "Shakespeare's Library," Skeat's "Shakespeare's Plutarch," and Boswell-Stone's "Shakespeare's Holinshed"; besides these are Skottowe and Simrock; and there are a host of publications under this and the former heads which may be ascertained through the medium of some Shakespeare Catalogue. But the works and writers I have already mentioned will probably be more than enough for the student or general reader.

\* \* \* \*

Among books issued since the foregoing went to press are Dr. Bradley's "Shakespearean Tragedy" (see pp. 418-429), "Shakespeare Documents," by Lambert, "Shakespeare" (Bell's Miniature Series) by Ewen, "The Sonnets of Shakespeare," by Beeching, "The Sonnets of Shakespeare," by Stopes, "Shakespeare, his Family and Friends," by Elton, "Moral System of Shakespeare," by Moulton, "Lectures on Ten of Shakespeare's Plays," by Stopford Brooke; also useful work by Theodor Erbe and many others abroad.

## APPENDIX II

## METRICAL AND OTHER NOTES

FOR Shakespeare's use of prose and rhyme see Chapter VIII; there also a few hints will be found on the subject of dramatic construction as an index of his artistic development; and in the same chapter the far more important progress of his style generally was fully traced. Here we return to the chronological evidence afforded by his use of rhyme, and we add notes on some other elements on the development of his verification.

(a) *Rhyme*. This is frequent in the earlier plays, the percentage in "Love's Labour's Lost," being 62·2, whereas in "The Winter's Tale" not one rhyming couplet is to be found. Between these extremes we mark a gradual disuse, intermittent, however, according to the subject and other circumstances. In "Richard III," for example, a play written under the influence of Marlowe, the percentage is only 3·5, but in the lyrical drama, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which closely follows in order of time, the percentage rises to 43. The rhyme test, therefore, though useful to mark the broader chronological distinctions, is not reliable when applied to plays that are near in date.

(b) *Feminine Endings*. Lines like "As fire drives out fire, so pity pi-ty," which have an extra unaccented syllable or musical reverberation at the end—known also as "hypermetrical," "redundant," or, more commonly, as lines with "double endings" or "feminine endings," are a

somewhat more reliable guide to periods of Shakespeare's authorship. Under this head we may again contrast "Love's Labour's Lost," which has only 4 per cent. of these endings, with "The Winter's Tale," which has 31.09; and in "The Tempest" they rise to 33 per cent. The main cause of this gradual increase was explained on pp. 346, 434; or in my "Handbook to Tennyson," pp. 360, 361.

(c) *The Pause*. Allied to this general growth of freedom as opposed to rigid form, of rhythm, indeed, as opposed to metre, are the five characteristics of Shakespeare's verse that remain to be considered. We begin with the Pause.

Something under this head of number and position of the Pause in Shakespeare's Iambic Pentameter was anticipated on pp. 433, 434; here we add that in such a line the normal positions of the Pause ("Handbook to Tennyson," p. 105) are at the end and after the second foot; and here Shakespeare places it at the outset of his career with almost unvarying monotony. Later, he varies these positions, and further adds frequently other pauses within the line. To exhibit this contrast nothing could serve us better than the two plays which stand first in the Folio of 1623. "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" is an excellent example of the poet's earlier type of verse under this head, and "The Tempest" of his later.

(d) *The Foot*. Briefly, in earlier plays, the Iambic foot prevails; later it is varied by a judicious employment especially of the trochaic foot; also of the spondee, and the light or unaccented foot; and, further, we can often distinguish feet of three syllables, unless, as is frequently the case, we prefer (p. 434) to count extra syllables within the line.

(e) *End-Stopt and Run-on lines*. According as the sense ends with the line, or is carried beyond it, we have examples of "enjambement" or "overflow," or, as above,



of "end-stopt" or "run-on" lines. Speaking generally, end-stopt lines close a *sentence*, a *clause*, or a *phrase*. The others, of course, break up these three structural elements of language. Here we have one of the best of all possible tests of Shakespeare's metrical development; for between such contrasts as 12·4 per cent. of overflow in "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," to 46 per cent. in "Cymbeline," the gradations are fairly even.

(f) *Light and Weak Endings*. Bound up with the foregoing, and indeed following from it, is the metrical characteristic of light and weak endings, of lines, that is to say, which end (though these are indefinable) with pronouns, auxiliaries, and the lighter notional words generally, and of lines that end (more definitely) with relational words—prepositions, that is, and conjunctions; and with the latter lines, I may remark, the overflow is more rapid. Like the former, and for the same reason, this test of light and weak endings is fairly reliable; and statistics will be furnished in Table II.

(g) *The Speech-Ending Test*. Nor is this by any means disconnected with the four preceding; at first the poet finds it convenient to end line and speech together; later, and as a result of his freer versification, the speeches end not only at the close, but also within the line. Again, the change is continuous, and a useful index of date, and it advances from about 1 in 100 in "The Comedy of Errors" to about 88 in 100 in "The Winter's Tale."

Most of these metrical and other particulars are exhibited in the following Table, which is based on the labours of Ingram, Fleay, Hertzberg, König, and others.

TABLE I.

	Total No. of lines.	Prose.	Blank Verse.	Pentameter Rhymes	Percentage of Rhyme.	Feminine Endings.	Run-on Lines	Speech- Endings.
Henry VI, Part I. . . .	2693	—	2379	14	10'0	8'2	10'4	'5
Titus Andronicus . . .	2525	43	2328	144	3'7	8'6	12'0	2'5
Comedy of Errors . . .	1770	240	1150	380	19'4	16'6	12'9	'6
Love's Labour's Lost . .	2789	1086	579	1028	62'2	7'7	18'4	10
Henry VI, Part II. . . .	3032	448	2562	122	2'9	11'7	11'4	1'1
Henry VI, Part III. . . .	2904	—	2749	155	3'4	11'7	9'5	'9
The Two Gentlemen of Verona . . . . .	2060	409	1510	116	6'5	18'4	12'4	5'8
Richard III . . . . .	3599	55(?)	3374	170	1'5	19'5	13'1	2'9
Richard II . . . . .	2644	—	2107	537	18'6	11'0	19'9	7'3
A Midsummer Night's Dream . . . . .	2251	441	878	711	41'4	7'3	13'2	17'3
Romeo and Juliet . . .	3012	105	2111	486	17'2	8'2	14'2	14'9
All's Well that Ends Well . . . . .	2981	1453	1234	230	19'4	20'4	28'4	74'0
King John . . . . .	2553	—	2403	150	4'5	6'3	17'7	12'7
The Taming of the Shrew . . . . .	2671	516	1971	109	4'4	17'7	8'1	3'6
The Merchant of Venice .	2705	673	1806	93	4'6	17'6	21'5	22'2
Henry IV, Part I. . . .	3170	1464	1622	84	2'7	5'1	22'8	14'2
Henry IV, Part II. . . .	3437	1860	1417	74	2'9	10'3	21'4	16'8
The Merry Wives of WindSOR . . . . .	3018	2703	227	69	6'4	27'2	20'1	20'5
Henry V . . . . .	3320	1531	1678	101	1'2	20'5	21'8	13'3
Much Ado about No- thing . . . . .	2823	2106	643	40	5'2	22'9	19'3	20'7
As You Like It . . . . .	2904	1681	925	71	6'1	25'5	17'1	21'6
'Twelfth Night . . . . .	2684	1741	763	120	3'7	25'6	14'7	36'3
Julius Caesar . . . . .	2440	165	2241	34	1'2	19'7	19'3	20'3
Hamlet . . . . .	3924	1208	2490	81	2'7	22'0	13'1	51'6
Troilus and Cressida . .	3423	1186	2025	196	8'6	21'8	27'4	31'3
Measure for Measure . .	2809	1134	1574	71	3'6	26'1	23'0	51'4
Othello . . . . .	3324	541	2672	86	3'2	28'1	19'5	41'4
King Lear . . . . .	3298	903	2238	74	3'4	28'5	29'3	60'9
Timon of Athens . . . .	2358	596	1560	164	8'5	24'7	32'5	62'8
Macbeth . . . . .	1993	158	1588	116	5'8	26'3	36'6	77'2
Pericles . . . . .	2386	418	1436	225	18'8	20'2	18'2	17'1*
Antony and Cleopatra . .	3964	255	2761	42	0'7	26'5	41'3	77'5
Coriolanus . . . . .	3392	829	2521	42	0'9	28'4	45'9	79'0
Cymbeline . . . . .	3448	638	2585	107	3'2	30'7	46'0	85'0
The Winter's Tale . . .	2750	844	1825	—	0'0	32'4	37'5	87'6
The Tempest . . . . .	2068	458	1458	2	0'1	35'4	41'5	84'5
Henry VIII . . . . .	2754	67(?)	2613	16	0'3	47'3	46'3	72'4

NOTE.—In the above Table, the figures of the columns headed "Percentage of Rhyme," "Feminine Endings," "Run-on lines," and "Speech-Endings" are those of König (Chap VII); but as Dr. Bradley has pointed out ("Shake-

spearean Tragedy," p. 474), König's 17·1 for "Pericles" ("Speech-Endings") must be an error. Possibly it represents the un-Shakespearean portions; or we should deduct 17·1 from 100, and write 82·9. Dr. Bradley substitutes (for "Pericles") 71 for Acts III., IV., and V., and 19 for Acts I. and II. Dr. Bradley also doubts König's percentage for "Othello," and thinks that 41·4 should read 58·6. For "Timon" the same authority gives 74·5 for the Shakespearean portions, whereas the 62·8 of König represents the whole play. Further, under this head of "Speech-Endings," Dr. Bradley's figures for the four great tragedies are, "Hamlet," 57, "Othello," 54, "King Lear," 69, and "Macbeth," 75.

In the foregoing Table I have arranged the thirty-seven plays as nearly as I can in a chronological order;<sup>1</sup> and with regard to the column headed, "Pentameter Rhymes" (*i.e.*, chiefly the Iambic Pentameter rhyming couplet), I must remark that it does not include the couplets of the Play Scene in "Hamlet," nor of the Masque in "The Tempest," nor of the Vision in "Cymbeline," nor of the Chorus in "The Winter's Tale," nor of the Prologue and Epilogue in "Henry VIII." I may add that the column headed "Speech-Endings" gives the percentage of speeches whose end is not co-incident with the end of a line; and that the figures in the columns headed "Feminine Endings" and "Run-on Lines" also represent a percentage.

Next, as to the Light and Weak Endings, I give them in a separate Table (II), for in many of the plays, chiefly those of earlier date, they do not occur in appreciable numbers. Also, the estimate of verse in each play differs slightly in this Table.

<sup>1</sup> But much of this, of course, is doubtful, and the very first play, "Henry VI. Part I.," may be of later date, in the Stationers' Books (1623), it seems to be styled, "The Thirde Parte of Henry the Sixt," and in 1602, what are now the Second and Third Parts were apparently entered in the Register as the First and Second.

TABLE II.—LIGHT AND WEAK ENDINGS (MOSTLY ACCORDING TO PROFESSOR INGRAM).

	Verse lines in Play.	Light Endings.	Weak Endings.	Percentage Light End	Percentage Weak En	Percent of both
Hamlet . . . . .	—	8	0	—	—	—
Julius Caesar . . . . .	—	10	1	—	—	—
All's Well that Ends Well . . . . .	—	11	2	—	—	—
Timon of Athens—						
(a) Whole Play . . . . .	1112(?)	16	5	1'26	?	?
(b) Shakespeare's part (Globe edition) . . . . .	—	13	2	—	—	—
Shakespeare's part (Fleay's edition) . . . . .	—	14	7	—	—	—
Macbeth . . . . .	—	21	2	—	—	—
Antony and Cleopatra . . . . .	2803	71	28	2'53	1'00	3'53
Coriolanus . . . . .	2563	60	44	2'34	1'71	4'05
Pericles (Shakespeare's part) . . . . .	719	20	10	2'78	1'39	4'17
The Tempest . . . . .	1460	42	25	2'82	1'71	4'59
Cymbeline . . . . .	2692	78	52	2'90	1'93	4'83
The Winter's Tale . . . . .	1825	57	43	3'12	2'36	5'48
The Two Noble Kinsmen (Shake- speare's part) . . . . .	1378	50	34	3'63	2'47	6'10
Henry VIII (Shakespeare's part)	1146	45	37	3'93	3'23	7'16

With regard to the above Table, it may be added that "Timon" and "Macbeth" seem to mark the transition to Shakespeare's later and more rapid style of verse, which he employs increasingly till the close.

Other figures relating to "The Two Noble Kinsmen" are, for Shakespeare's part: (a) light endings, 1 in 21; (b) weak endings, 1 in 32; (c) feminine endings, 1 in 3'4; and for Fletcher's part: (a) light endings, 1 in 445; (b) weak endings, 1 in 1,426; and (c) feminine endings, 1 in 1'9. These figures afford a remarkable contrast, which may be further stated as 50 light endings in Shakespeare to 3 in Fletcher; 34 weak endings in Shakespeare to 1 in Fletcher; and as to run-on lines, these in Shakespeare are 1 in 2'1, and in Fletcher 1 in 5'26.



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*Titles of Works by Shakespeare are printed in italics.*

*Numbers that stand first are usually a special reference.*

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